

WESTERN Recorder

March 22, 2016

Shine Like Stars ☒ Philippians 2:15

Volume 190, Issue 6

Ky. churches give more than \$11M through CP

Louisville— Bent on getting the gospel to the nations, Kentucky Baptists have given more than \$11 million to support missionaries through the Cooperative Program over the past six months.

That's more than \$400,000 ahead of budget projections, according to the latest financial report from the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

"I thank God for the generosity of Kentucky Baptists and their willingness to give sacrificially to ensure that people all over the world are hearing the good news that Jesus saves," said Paul Chitwood, executive-director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention. "This is fantastic news that puts us on sound financial footing as we approach the second half of our fiscal year."

Some 2,400 churches across Kentucky contribute through the Cooperative Program, the primary means for 750,000 Kentucky Baptists to pay for spreading the gospel around the world.

The latest financial report shows the state's churches gave \$1,821,178 in February. That was up by more than \$200,000 over February 2015, when contributions totaled \$1,612,957.

The overall total for the past six months is \$11,069,973, which is \$444,973 above budget projections and \$136,593 above the first six months of last year.

The churches also have given more than \$1 million over the past six months for state missions through the Eliza Broadus offering and more than \$4.4 million for international missions through the Lottie Moon offering. The Annie Armstrong offering stands at more than \$300,000.

Lowell Ashby, head of the Kentucky Baptist Convention's Finance and Business Services Team, said contributions over the past six months are more than 4 percent ahead of budget projections.

"This level of generosity puts us in a position to do so much more for the cause of Christ," Ashby said. "We are thrilled Kentucky Baptists are continuing their support of local, national and international missions by increasing their support through the Cooperative Program and all our mission offerings." (KBC)



Left: Members of Baptist Union of Southern Africa and Baptist Global Response survey fire damage that burned more than 1,000 homes in an impoverished area of Cape Town. Each small dwelling typically houses as many as nine people. (Photo by Coy Webb/KBC) **Right:** A Lesotho woman is baptized after hearing the gospel from a missionary. Kentucky Baptist Disaster Relief Director Coy Webb was present when the woman accepted Christ and said the Baptist Union of Southern Africa efforts to start a disaster relief ministry opens the doors for the gospel. (IMB photo)



South Africans delve into disaster relief with KBC, BGR guidance

By Lily Jameson*

Cape Town, South Africa—When disaster strikes, Baptist leaders in southern Africa don't want to depend heavily on foreign aid. As Christians, they want to demonstrate God's love themselves. They want to help take care of their own people.

Baptist Global Response is helping the Baptist Union of Southern Africa begin a disaster relief ministry by forging a relationship between the union and the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

The Baptist Union consists of hundreds of churches in the continent's southern region, according to its website, and in cooperation with the two organizations, the union will create the first disaster relief organization operated by South African Baptists.

The partnership began 10 months ago, when Jeff O'Loughlin, a BGR disaster

relief and community development coordinator, met Errol Muller, whom he described as the director of the Baptist Union's holistic ministry organization. Muller had been tasked with establishing a disaster response program. Large secular relief agencies already operated within the country, and the Baptist Union wanted to establish a Christian alternative.

"South African Baptists have the will, expertise and resources necessary for an effective disaster response organization," O'Loughlin wrote in an email. "They just needed the know how to put it all together."

O'Loughlin knew the Baptist Union would need direction from a well-run disaster relief organization with experience in southern Africa.

So, he turned to the disaster relief arm of the KBC, which has responded to several major disasters, such as a flood in Japan and the water crisis in Flint, Mich.

He felt the KBC and the Baptist Union would work well together because of comparable size and scope.

From Feb. 28 to March 4, KBC Executive Director Paul Chitwood and KBC Disaster Relief Director Coy Webb began ☒ See South Africa ... Page 3

"South African Baptists have the will, expertise and resources necessary for an effective disaster response organization."

Jeff O'Loughlin,
BGR Disaster Relief coordinator



This image of "the promise after the storm" over Eastwood Baptist Church in Bowling Green was captured on March 14 by 10-year-old Kennedy Greer on a cell phone. Tom James, pastor at Eastwood Baptist and a past president of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, shared her photo last week on social media.

Find us on
Facebook
and on
twitter
as **westernrecorder**

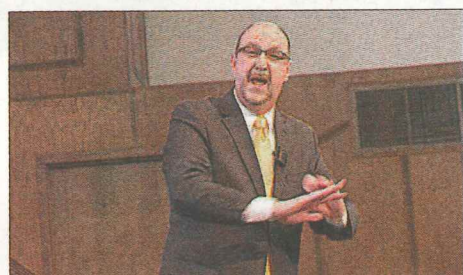


Western Recorder 03-22-2016

Gray, Smith, Patterson headline West Ky. Evangelism Conference



The Nolans



Todd Gray



Kevin Smith



Paige Patterson

By Myriah Snyder

Princeton—Approximately 250 Kentucky Baptists gathered in the sanctuary of Southside Baptist Church in Princeton on March 7 for the 29th annual West Kentucky Evangelism Conference.

Speakers included Todd Gray, Kentucky Baptist Convention's regional consultant for western Kentucky; Kevin Smith, KBC president; and Paige Patterson, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Texas. Phil Hoskins, an evangelist, was ill, and Larry Robertson and John Mathis stepped in to preach.

The event, sponsored by the Caldwell/Lyon Association, featured the Nelons gospel group and highlighted the Week of Prayer for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering and the work of the North American Mission Board.

Your greatest enemy

Speaking from 1 Peter 5:8 on "your greatest enemy," Gray emphasized, "You have an enemy; Your enemy is at work; Your enemy has a goal."

He shared that the enemy is a personal, powerful and intentional enemy, and he uses temptation and persecution.

"You're in his plan, and he's working his plan," Gray continued.

Using the all-too-relatable example for the rural west Kentucky audience, he described a deer hunter following a blood trail. Gray said, "Can I tell you something about your enemy? ... Satan follows the hurt trail. He finds the people of God who have been hurt, and he just follows that trail."

He added, "Your enemy's goal is to 'seek whom he may devour.' He will devour you. If he can't get to you, he will

devour your family. If he can't devour your family, he will devour your ministry. If he can't get there, he will devour your church."

"You have an enemy," he repeated for emphasis.

"Lest we give him too much credit, which he doesn't deserve, I have good news for you. You also have a champion!" he said.

"You have to call on the name of Jesus," Gray urged. "Stop depending on yourself. He has seen you through this far. He will see you through to the very end. He is the champion!"

Sweaty Christians?

"You don't see a lot of sweaty Christians nowadays," Smith observed.

"You hardly ever hear people say, when I look at Christians, I think they really work hard to obey the Lord Jesus Christ; they work so hard, it looks like they're sweaty-type people," Smith added, basing his message on Philippians 2:12.

Much of American Christianity is in a relaxed posture, he asserted. Referencing Ephesians 6, he asked, "If we engage in spiritual warfare, how in the world can the church relax?"

"We have to put some effort into 'work(ing) out your salvation with fear and trembling,'" he said, borrowing Paul's words.

Addressing culture's growing opposition to Christianity, he exclaimed, "One thing that's good about these days is that everyone who professes to be a believer is going to have to show that there is some proof in their daggone pudding!"

"Yes, we are 'saved by grace through faith, not of works, lest any man should boast' (Ephesians 2). But if you would

keep reading..., it says God has 'ordained good works that we should walk in them,'" Smith explained.

"We go around waving little flags, 'Once saved, always saved.' Yeah, but the key thing is whether or not you were once saved," he billowed.

Believers doing the work of God as they obey the word of God is evidence that God is working in them, he said.

"If God is working in you, what God is working in you will work out of you," he said.

'Don't miss your opportunity'

Paige Patterson used a passage from 2 Kings 7 in which lepers tell the good news about wealth in the Syrians' tents to illustrate evangelism.

"This is an evangelism conference, and ostensibly, Southern Baptists believe in evangelism," he said.

"I want you to know that God is not through with Southern Baptists. I want you to know that we are going to be looking at the greatest days yet," Patterson asserted.

Patterson said he didn't make such a statement without an understanding that those days may come with great difficulties, too.

"We don't need to worry about God wiping us out," he said. "We just need God to infuse us with a new commitment to what matters."

He challenged pastors, "We have to reshape our lives in terms of witness. To whom have you witnessed lately?"

"There are a thousand ways to witness for Christ, and we're not doing any of them," he said.

"Don't miss the opportunity to share your faith," he urged. We'd better get with personal witnessing." (WR)

Amid party lights of spring break, BCM students seek to reach 'darkest demographic'

Panama City Beach, Fla.—Panama City Beach is a hot spot for undergrads looking to make the most of spring break, including some 100 Baptist college students from the Bluegrass.

Kentucky Baptist students from five state universities are participating in Beach Reach, a mission trip experience widely known for its "free rides, free pancakes" rallying cry.

The premise of the ministry is simple: Offer the Florida-or-bust crowd free transportation during spring break and a complimentary breakfast, which might open the door to a conversation about faith.

"Many of these college students have worked for weeks on their testimonies and how to share them. Beach Reach is just as much about growing their faith as it is introducing spring breakers to Christ," said Brian Combs, the Kentucky Baptist Convention's collegiate evangelism strategist.

Baptist Campus Ministry students from Northern Kentucky University and Western Kentucky University arrived in Panama City Beach March 5. Eastern Kentucky University, Kentucky State University and the University of Kentucky will take their turn this week.

Combs said Beach Reach provides free rides for about 1,200 college students on an average night, many of whom are high or inebriated—or both. During the trip, BCM students try to spark conversations with their passengers, sometimes asking what

they think about Jesus or heaven.

Volunteers from Georgia Baptist Disaster Relief, longtime partners of Beach Reach, made more than 27,000 pancakes last year.

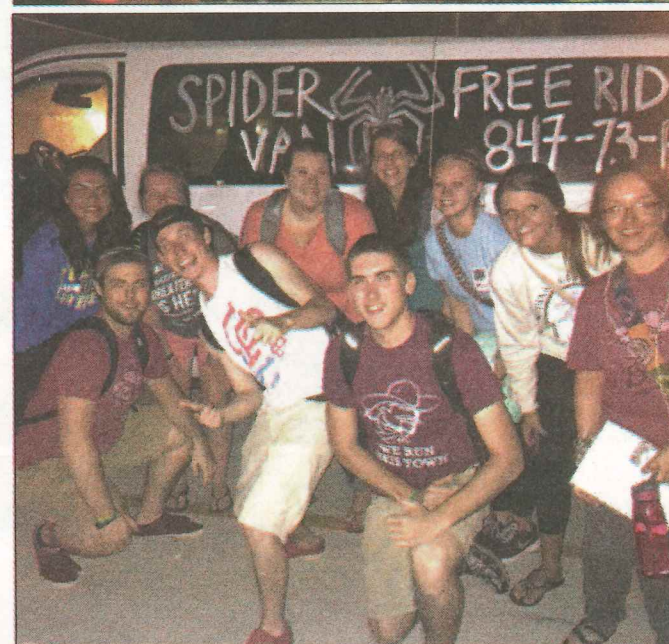
When BCM students aren't giving rides, they are walking the raucous Panama City Beach strip, handing out business cards advertising the free rides and breakfast. Others are assigned to a large prayer room where overhead screens display texts sent from students out in the thick of it.

"Please pray for the amazing conversation that happened with Shawn in Subway," one BCM student texted Tuesday night. "I was able to share the whole gospel with him. He is so hungry to know God and have a relationship with Him. Shawn will be at pancakes in the morning so we can keep talking. Please pray that this sinks in with him and he can come to know Jesus as his Savior."

Another student wrote, "Prayers needed as two men are very firm in their non-beliefs and think that everything happens because of a scientific reason."

Combs thanked Kentucky Baptist churches whose partnership with BCM through the Cooperative Program make it possible to build up a generation of strong, evangelistic minded believers. He also asked for Kentucky Baptists' prayers as BCM students continue to engage "our darkest demographic, in a dark and disillusioned place."

Prayer requests can be found at www.beachreachlive.com/prayer. (KBC)



Top: Ivy and Jordan, KSU campus missionary interns, try to draw people in for a meal, meeting their physical needs in hopes of an opportunity to share the solution to their spiritual needs.

L: EKV students: Rachel Prange, Hayden Elliott, Johna Howdyshell, Wes Newman, Sarah Nibert, Amanda Thurman, Blake Wilkey, Megan Turner, Kaylee Limmings, Camille McQueen

Churches and students 'changing the channel'

Frankfort—Kentucky Baptist churches and college students working together would be a powerful force for sharing the gospel on state campuses, said a collegiate evangelism leader.

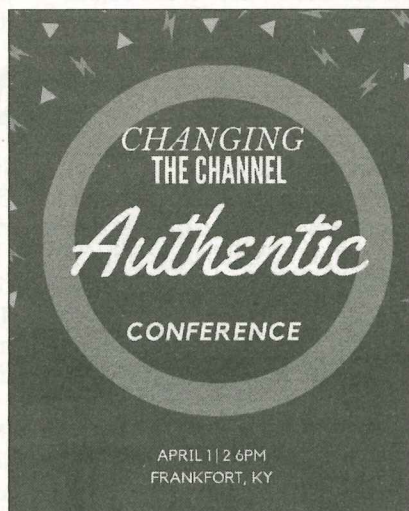
"We estimate about 95 percent of students on our middle, high school and state university campuses are living lives apart from Christ," said Kentucky Baptist Convention Collegiate Evangelism Strategist Brian Combs.

Reducing that statistic will require a cooperative weaving of resources, said Combs, inviting churches to learn how at Changing the Channel, an equipping conference on April 1-2 in Frankfort.

Changing the Channel introduces participants to the various sub-groups within the culture and explores ways to engage these affinities from both a church-based and campus-based perspective.

Combs said one of those ways, which he plans to discuss in depth at the conference, is with Twelve24. Through this initiative, KBC regional campus missionaries guide networks of church leaders, youth workers and church members in developing strategies to share the gospel on campuses.

Setting the serious tone for the event at the Capital Plaza Hotel will be nationally known author, church planter and rap musician D. A.



Horton, who will draw from his experience as the former national coordinator for Urban Student Missions at the North American Mission Board.

Other speakers include KBC president Kevin Smith, teaching pastor at Highview Baptist Church in Louisville, Jamie Ward, co-lead pastor at Hillvue Heights Church in Bowling Green, and Elaina Barron, wife of KBC Campus Missionary Jon Barron.

Breakout sessions on Saturday include intimate discussions about personal evangelism, defining a biblical world view, and engaging international college students.

For registration information about Changing the Channel, visit www.kybcm.org/event/ctc2016. (KBC)



Gene Parr, surrounded by students, alumni and colleagues, was sent off in prayer at retirement celebration.

Parr retires at Morehead State, leaving a discipleship legacy

By Myriah Snyder

Morehead—Gene Parr, campus missionary to Morehead State University, is retiring after 34 years. The legacy he leaves behind on the campus is one of discipleship.

"Gene has established on a national level the best discipleship ministry at probably any Baptist campus in the nation," Jon Barron, campus missionary for University of Kentucky, said.

"Gene is dedicated to study the word on a daily basis," Barron added. "He is one of the most fun people to spend time with, and he has a heart and a passion to truly, like the Great Commission says, go make disciples."

"To be underneath his tutelage and learning how to truly disciple students was impactful for me, and I have learned a lot from him," Barron said, explaining that he worked for two years with Parr as the associate campus missionary at Morehead.

Parr noted that the basis of Morehead BCM's discipleship program was derived from LifeWay's collegiate ministries discipleship department. The format is for the students to have daily quiet time and a weekly group experience to share what God taught them during the week. The campus missionary was there to "help them get more out of that experience than they would have on their own," he said.

"I was on the mission field with the opportunity to do life with students Monday through Friday," Parr said. "What commended itself was to take a four-year college experience and allow students to be disciplined as Jesus did with the 12 for three years."

Campus missionaries are disciples sent out to bear fruit that lasts, he believes. "It just seems that you have more assurance of good fruit by discipleship rather than preaching alone. I think Henry Blackaby would affirm this (in Experiencing God)," he continued.

Morehead's BCM has a particular focus on outreach. "College students are attracted by fun, and they are kept by meaning," Parr said. "So if a program is not fun, then they are not going to show up, and if it doesn't have a deeper meaning, then they are not going to stick around. They are not going to show up for deeper meaning."

Parr continued, "So, we just had a fun group of students who also really wanted to be disciples. And, since students do a better job of reaching students than anybody else, it was a contagious ministry."

In addition to mission trips to places like Ecuador and South Africa, Parr has lead

Morehead's BCM groups to be involved in Beach Reach, and working with Southern Baptist Disaster Relief, among other ministries.

Each week, for the campus, the BCM hosts "Tuesday Night Live," a time of live music, comedy and gospel messages. Greek life, sports teams and even ROTC get involved.

Morehead's BCM has more than once been recognized as the top student organization at Morehead State University, according to Keith Inman, former director of collegiate ministry and young adults with the Kentucky Baptist Convention who now is lead pastor at First Baptist Church of Murray.

"A lot of it was because of the very intentional bridges that Gene led the BCM to build into the student community. Whether it was to athletes or to Greeks or to different ethnic groups, Gene was very intentional about building bridges into the community at Morehead State," Inman said, sharing stories of how a student revival broke out across the nation in 1995 and was very apparent on the campus of Morehead State.

Additionally, Parr took the time to reach out to the faculty at Morehead by being part of a reading group, where he would bring Christian titles. "He was incredibly respected at Morehead State," Inman said.

"What God used to change my life was a Christian college experience, so I wanted students at the state university where I was sent as a missionary to have that kind of experience," Parr said.

"After I had been there a while, I realized that every campus was different, and if you could learn the campus and continue to learn the campus, then the longevity would spread generation to generation," he added. "I think that college students are looking for a certain amount of security and continuity. It just really commended itself to stay and seem to be fruitful."

"In other words, I never wanted to be more than just a campus missionary. There wasn't anything above that that I aspired to be," he said.

Although his retirement party was March 5, Parr said he will officially retire "when-ever they find someone to take my place." He then plans to spend a lot of time with his four grandchildren and one on the way.

"I just appreciate the opportunity that Kentucky Baptists have given me, and how they have taken care of my family. I've had the privilege of being their missionary at a state university," he said. (WR)

South Africa

Continued from page 1

to cement a partnership. They spent the week in Cape Town, South Africa, meeting with and training leaders from the Baptist Union in disaster relief strategy.

Webb said he assessed communities within Cape Town alongside Baptist Union members, and he saw the potential hazards for which the organization knew it needed to prepare.

He said he was concerned about the city's shantytowns, which consist of flimsy houses built close together.

Webb described the informal settlements as major fire hazards and said many other impoverished neighborhoods are at risk for flooding, as well.

In his discussions with the Baptist Union, he encouraged them to focus and prepare for fire and flood scenarios while also training in trauma care. He wanted the budding organization to start small.

"It would be far better to find gap areas right now in current disaster responses ... and maybe begin with two or three ministries, and (then) allow the ministry to grow as more resources become available," he said.

"Rather than trying to do too much initially and becoming overwhelmed or perhaps not having

adequate volunteers or resources to do things in an effective manner," Webb said.

The KBC and Baptist Union are still working out the details of their partnership. However, Chitwood said it will likely involve disaster response workshops, for which the KBC will provide trainers, and Webb said it might send a team to work alongside the Baptist Union, as well, during a disaster. Chitwood and Webb are both eager to share their personnel.

"Our volunteers are very well organized, well trained and have a lot of experience with this," Chitwood said.

As the relationship between the KBC and the Baptist Union of Southern Africa develops, BGR will continue acting as a liaison between the two organizations, and O'Loughlin said it might also send representatives to help with training.

Within two or three years, BGR and KBC hope the Baptist Union disaster relief operation can function on its own. It could even start responding to international disasters, as well.

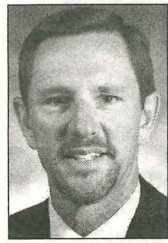
Chitwood said he admires the leadership's drive to become independent, and he finds their assertiveness and enthusiasm encouraging. (WR)

*Lily Jameson is a staff writer for Baptist Global Response.

Foster care parenting in South Africa

A common tendency among foster parents is that we love to talk about it. We love to talk about it in the hopes that others will see the need and opportunity to care for the countless number of kids needing a home, and we love to talk about it because each foster family's story is filled with unique joys and challenges. As much

Together We are the KBC



Paul Chitwood

as I like to talk about foster parenting, I was a little surprised to find myself talking about it in South Africa.

On a recent trip to explore a new aspect of our 3-year-old partnership between Baptist Global Response and Kentucky Baptists to meet emergency needs in Sub-Saharan Africa, I was pleased to learn that the Baptist Union of Southern Africa has

an orphan and foster care ministry much like our Sunrise Children's Services. The leader of that ministry currently has six foster children. In a nation with 4 million orphans, the need is overwhelming.

South Africa is one of several nations in Sub-Saharan Africa suffering the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS. Sub-Saharan Africa is more heavily affected by HIV/AIDS than any other part of the world. Nearly 23 million people are living with HIV in the region. In 2012, 1.2 million people died from AIDS there, and 1.9 million people became infected with HIV.

Since the beginning of the epidemic, 14.8 million children have lost one or both parents to the disease. The HIV prevalence rate now exceeds 20 percent in a number of African countries, pushing the average life expectancy in some countries below 49 years. Households are severely affected by the loss of income earners, necessity to provide home-based care for sick relatives, and an ongoing orphan crisis.

In the midst of such hopelessness, a bright light that has been shining for nearly 140 years is the Baptist Union of Southern Africa. BUSA was founded in 1877 by five partnering churches in the Eastern Cape. Today it comprises more than 800 churches spread throughout Southern Africa.

Having worked with several overseas Baptist conventions in the past, we've been greatly encouraged by the diversity, organization, and commitment observable in BUSA's leadership. As KBC Disaster Relief Director Coy Webb shared steps for BUSA to establish its own disaster relief ministry, we found leaders anxious to grow their ministry to the hurting. Plans are in the works for us to support their training efforts.

The proverb is true, "It's better to teach a man to fish than give him fish for a day." While we will continue to serve alongside BGR to help the hurting in Sub-Saharan Africa, we are excited by the prospect of coming alongside African churches as they help the hurting in their own land.

IMB baptisms hit lowest level since 1969

By Will Hall

Overseas baptisms for 2015 dropped to 54,762 from the 190,957 reported for 2014, according to information submitted by the International Mission Board in response to a request by the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee. Likewise, the number of new churches fell from 13,824 to 3,842 over the same one-year period.

The baptism figure represents the lowest level reported in 46 years.

A note explaining the declines states the decrease is "due to one large CPM no longer reported" (CPM refers to "church planting movement"). Since 2009, the IMB has changed data gathering procedures to "no longer include reports from partner conventions and unions," but to report information about "work related to IMB personnel only," according to annotations in the SBC Annual.

A table provided by IMB, in item 22 of 25 replies to "Ministry Inquiries," shows an even larger four-year downturn. Baptisms fell by 211,689 since 2012 and the number of new churches declined 20,231 during the same period.

For perspective about the drop to 54,762 annual baptisms, according to

data in SBC Annuals and information posted on the IMB's website, the 50,003 baptisms for 1969 were achieved with 2,371 missionaries deployed on the field while the baptisms tallied in 2015 were accomplished with 4,707 personnel under appointment.

The information being reported for 2015 represents work done in 2014 during the transition of IMB leadership from Tom Elliff, who had led Southern Baptists' largest evangelism entity since March 2011, to David Platt, who was elected in August 2014 to replace Elliff.

Meanwhile, the numbers for work accomplished in 2015 and 2016 likely will be impacted by the terminations of a reported 1,132 personnel as part of a plan launched in August 2015 to reduce the total number of IMB personnel "by at least 600." The process will not be finalized until nearly the end of April.

The Baptist Message of Louisiana discovered the information about the fallen numbers of overseas baptisms and new churches while reviewing materials IMB supplied to the SBC Executive Committee's request for information.

In advance of its February meeting,

the SBC Executive Committee sent a data call to all 10 entities, including itself, which receive funding through

the Cooperative Program. It also queried LifeWay Christian Resources and Guide-

Stone Financial Resources; and, the Council of Seminary Presidents provided comparative data.

The information from these SBC entities was posted online and an email was dispatched Feb. 19 to an electronic mailing list with a link, www.sbc.net/cp/ministryreports, to the main web page.

During this same time frame, the IMB released a press report, "Thanks to Southern Baptists, IMB in 'much healthier financial position,'" which included six paragraphs of general information about the organizational "reset" that has fundamentally reformed the structure of Southern Baptists' missionary forces by targeting missionaries at least 50 years old with a minimum of 5 years of field experience and dropped the number of IMB people in the field to 3,817, the lowest total since 1993. (BP)

Will Hall is the editor of the Louisiana Baptist Message.

Encouragement: Priceless

Each Sunday, we'd haul baby beds, equipment and chairs to our temporary meeting place. We were church planters before church planting was "cool!" Though it was hard work, the results were awesome. Flash forward to present day. Our son-in-law and daughter serve as church planting pastor and worship leader for a new church. Each Sunday, they load a trailer and haul all kinds of equipment to their downtown Indianapolis meeting site. America's still a great mission field.

You are already involved in church planting. A portion of your tithe to your Southern Baptist church helps plant SBC churches through the Cooperative Program. Your annual Annie Armstrong offering helps plant churches. Many churches also partner with an individual church plant across the U.S. and Canada (see sendme.namb.net).

But did you know that you—as an individual or small group—can personally encourage a church planter? If your church is planting a church, cheer for that planter, or study namb.net to find a planter. Your small encouragements can make a big difference, and it's simpler than you might imagine! Try some of these fresh ideas:

Pay attention. Show interest and joy

in what God's doing. Put a photo of the planter's family in your meeting room as a prayer reminder. Study their website, blog, Facebook or newsletters. Celebrate victories and milestones. Visit the church, if possible.

Share your own talents, contacts, professional abilities, time and spiritual gifts. What unique help could you or

your group provide? Could you create their website or help with online surveys? Help find a building site? Staff their Vacation Bible School or sports outreach? Do neighborhood events, building projects, marketing? Offer your expertise.

Encourage the planter and his wife. For example, a women's group could send encouragement notes to the planter's wife. Pray for her. Mail her a book,

with personal notes written inside. Surprise her with an online birthday party, complete with balloons and a delivered gift.

Share monetarily. Set a class goal to give for this month's Annie Armstrong mission offering for North American missions. God may prompt you individually to give additional gifts for specific needs of your church plant.

Be a friend. Planters often carry the huge weight (and privilege) of a church loaded with new Christians. Hmm...

Fresh Ideas



Diana Davis

WESTERN Recorder

Shine Like Stars *Philippians 2:15

Box 43969
Louisville, KY 40253

DR. TODD DEATON
Editor

RANDALL JONES
Marketing & Business Manager

Board of Directors:
Dan Summerlin (chair), Paducah;
Chip Hutcheson (vice chair), Princeton;
Bill Ellis, (secretary), Lexington;
Bill Bartleman, Paducah;
Billy Compton, Mount Washington;
Linda Cooper, Bowling Green;
Bill Edmonds, Louisville;
Floyd Price, Richmond;
Paul Nunn, Prestonsburg;
Rick Robbins, Florence;
Larry Rowell, Campbellsville;
Jim Woolums, Erlanger

Western Recorder is published bi-weekly by Western Recorder Inc., an agency of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253. Periodicals postage paid at Louisville, Ky. (USPS 679-380)

For general information or to give news tips, call (502) 489-3535; or email: news@westernrecorder.org.

POSTMASTER: Send address corrections to: Western Recorder, Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253.

To subscribe: Send \$17 for a one-year, individual subscription or visit our website and subscribe to our electronic-only edition at \$10.60 per year.

Letters to the editor:

The Baptist Forum section of the Western Recorder provides an opportunity for Kentucky Baptists to express their viewpoints. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Western Recorder's editorial staff, its Board of Directors, or the Kentucky Baptist Convention. Letters should be no more than 300 words in length and will be edited for style, clarity and space. Letters must reflect a spirit of Christian charity and civility.



Don't wait to say 'Send me'

Not long ago I had the privilege of visiting with 1,200 college students for the weekly meeting of The Salt Company, a ministry of Cornerstone Church in Ames, Iowa, near the campus of Iowa State University. Cornerstone was birthed from The Salt Company 21 years ago. The goal of The Salt Company was to reach students at Iowa State for Christ and today this ministry keeps that as its primary goal.

Two years ago Cornerstone planted Candeo church in Waterloo, Iowa, near the University of Northern Iowa. Already it averages more than 500 each week in attendance and the church is baptizing new believers on a regular basis.

A great many of the students attending The Salt Company each week are already living a "send me" lifestyle. Hundreds gather every Monday morning to pray for friends who don't know Christ. They're committed to discipling young believers and over the years hundreds have given a semester to serve in overseas missions.

Most of us are familiar with Isaiah 6:8 when the prophet hears God ask, "Who should I send? Who shall go for us?" and Isaiah answers, "Here I am. Send me."

But too often when we are passing through a phase of life like college or a work transition or the birth of our first child, it's too easy to say, "Here I am. Send me later" instead of living out "send me" right now, right where God has placed us.

That's why I am grateful for those college students I met. They are an example to all of us that we should live out God's call all the time—even in

those times of transition. Even when we are preparing for the future.

I am also grateful for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering and for all of the individuals and churches who sacrificially give to it each year. It provides 49 percent of NAMB's annual budget and all of it goes directly to missionaries and to church plants like Candeo in Northern Iowa.

As a result, hundreds of college students are being reached for Christ at Candeo alone. In fact we have posted one of their recent baptism celebration videos if you want to see and hear some of the life-change stories taking place.

Giving so that others can go and be reached is so important. God has used the giving of Southern Baptists in remarkable ways throughout our history and it is a blessing that can't be measured in earthly terms. It is what helps start churches like Candeo and what allows thousands of our church planters and other missionaries remain on the field, fulfilling God's call.

But beyond the giving, we must remember that God also wants each of us to live out Isaiah's "send me" attitude every day. For some of us that will mean a call to a faraway place and maybe a new vocation. For others it might mean being willing to work in a different city for a while to help a church plant get started.

And for many, "send me" means taking the gospel to those we work with, go to school with and live with every day. Don't miss the mission field all around you and don't miss how God wants to use you to reach it. (BP)

Kevin Ezell is president of the North American Mission Board.

First Person



Kevin Ezell

Grieving for a spouse

Q: My wife of 50 years recently died. I'm sort of at a loss for how to grieve.

A: Grief is a uniquely individual experience. The support of family, friends, church, colleagues, and neighbors are invaluable. Permit yourself to share the story of your marriage, to process your feelings out loud, to receive the physical presence and touch of others, to hear prayers on your behalf, and to hear treasured stories and memories about your wife.

Spend time alone as well as be with others, cry or feel numb, smile and even laugh at great memories, talk about your wife or not, and carry on with daily living activities. Make simple plans for going out with friends or family for meals or outings.

Recovering from such a loss is a meandering rather than linear journey. Those who care will want to be available to you, but they may need some clear direction as to

what you desire and need. Think about what might help you feel relief and seek that from others—such as meeting weekly for coffee, Sunday lunch after church, company when running errands, joining in with family activities or family events of friends.

Consider looking for ways to help others. Focusing on their needs can provide pain relief. Scripture narrative reminds us that remembrance and celebration are commanded by God.

Explore meaningful ways to remember and celebrate the life of your wife and the marriage relationship you both shared: create a special photo book, journal on vacation memories, design and dedicate a Christmas ornament that can be given to family members, record your marriage story and share with family, in an artful way create a marriage timeline that gives a visual of important events, make a donation or volunteer with an organization or ministry that your wife valued, adopt a Christmas angel that shares your wife's name, sponsor a child somewhere in the world that shares her name, visit a park and retrace the path the two of you walked together.

Allow your grief to be filled with meaning and celebration.



Valerie Vincent

Are you cleansed & called?

Why should every Christian say to God, "I will pray however You want me to pray, I will give whatever You want me to give, and I will go wherever and whenever You want me to go"—whether it's to that dangerous area in your city, or to a distant part of North America, or anywhere else in the world He might lead you?

Because we have an incomprehensibly glorious God. Because we are a sinfully lost people. Because we have a merciful Savior willing to die in our place. And because we have an indescribably urgent mission.

Read Isaiah 6:1-13 and you will hear the personal testimony of an unworthy servant—just like you and me—who was cleansed and called by a holy God to proclaim the gospel. What was Isaiah's first response after beholding the holiness of God? "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" (v.5).

We might think, "Relax, Isaiah. You're overdoing it." But we would be tragically wrong.

We are a depraved people, just as Isaiah and the Israelites were depraved. Our sin leads directly to the wars and suffering and condemnation that afflict the world today. How can we stand before an incomprehensibly great God and not be condemned? Isaiah felt the same way. He cries out in depravity—and the Lord responds in mercy. God commands a seraph to take a burning coal from the altar, touch Isaiah's lips and say, "Your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for" (v.7).

How can a holy God say to guilty sinners, "You are not guilty"? In Isaiah 53, this same penitent prophet foretells that Christ, the servant, will endure the penalty of sin and take the place of sinners. What mercy! An incomprehensibly great God saves a sinfully lost people through a merciful Savior.

Support until the Lord returns

You do not have to be wealthy to be able to set up a plan that will provide financial support until the Lord returns to charitable causes that are important to you.

Providing ongoing support for your church; state, national and/or international missions; ministries to hurting children and their families; disaster relief; and/or other causes can be accomplished through the creation of a new endowment fund or by making gifts to an existing endowment fund.

An endowment fund is a permanent, perpetual fund managed either by the cause benefited by your gift or another entity such as the Kentucky Baptist Foundation. Only the earnings from the endowment fund are distributed for use by the cause(s) you name as beneficiaries; the original value of what you give is never distributed.

A large gift is not required to establish an endowment fund with the Kentucky Baptist Foundation. It can be started with any amount and you can add to it from time to time over your lifetime. This permits even those of modest means to do much more than they ever dreamed possible. As the endowment fund grows, more lives will be touched and blessed through the support provided.

Establishing (or adding to) an endowment fund during your lifetime may provide income tax savings if you itemize deductions and capital gains tax savings if you use appreciated assets to fund your gift.

All good things come from God. Establishing an endowment fund, whether through a single large gift or a lifetime of more modest levels of giving, permits you to demonstrate your gratitude for God's blessings and your desire to be involved in touching lives in His name.



Laurie Valentine

First Person



David Platt

What kind of response does such divine compassion compel? Isaiah's example is clear. Such mercy compels the commitment of our lives. Our voices. Our all. "Who should I send?" He asks (v.8, HCSB). When more than 2 billion people have no access to the gospel, is there anything greater to

give your life to than declaring the gospel of this God? Every unreached person in the world has knowledge of God, whether it's a man in an African jungle, a woman in an Asian village, a nomad in a remote desert—or the newly arrived immigrant family in your community. They all have enough knowledge of God to show them that He is incomprehensibly glorious and they are sinfully lost. But that's all they have.

That's why we must go to them because the gospel is powerful enough to save them and satisfy them forever.

And they are here—in our great North American urban centers and the countless communities that surround them. More than 80 percent of the people on our continent now live in metropolitan areas. Our North American missionaries, our Southern Baptist state conventions, our associations and our churches must reach them to be faithful to God in our day. And praise God for how the North American Mission Board is leading all of us to do just that.

As we approach the Easter season and celebrate the resurrection of our Savior, I challenge you to give generously and sacrificially to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering. What your church gives will help support missionaries, fuel church planting and church revitalization efforts across North America and mobilize believers—including you—to reach the unreached among us.

"Who should I send?" our Lord asks. Let your response be: "Here I am. Send me!" (BP)

David Platt is president of the International Mission Board.

WHY WE GAVE MORE

Three Graves County churches increase their CP giving

Mayfield—At the Graves County Baptist Association annual meeting, Director of Missions Glynn Copeland reported several of its churches had an increase in Cooperative Program support in the 2014-2015 year. After digging deeper, it was discovered that at least three churches made intentional decisions to raise their contribution to the Cooperative Program.

While there may have been others, the three churches that were discovered—and their pastors who led them to do so—include Bell City, Presley Lamm; Mayfield First, Wes Fowler; and Sedalia, Brad Hall.

Brad Hall has been pastor of Sedalia Baptist for three and a half years. When he arrived, Hall noticed that the church's Cooperative Program giving was not as strong as it should be. The congregation was giving a set amount of \$4,500 annually.

Hall led the church to increase to \$10,000 in 2013, and then \$20,000 the following year. This past year, they reached \$24,000, which is about 6 percent of the church's total budget.

His goal is for Sedalia to reach 10 percent of undesignated giving. Its total missions giving this past year was \$85,000, up by \$15,000 since 2012. He believes the congregation has increased their CP and other missions giving because God has blessed them financially.

Wes Fowler has been pastor of Mayfield's First Church for four-and-a-half years. When he arrived, the members were giving 4 percent of their undesignated offerings to the Cooperative Program.

Fowler came to Mayfield from a strong CP-giving church in Georgia. During the interview process, he asked for Mayfield First's budget, and he shared with its search committee that he thought their CP support was low. If called as their pastor, he said he wanted them to increase their giving.

Fowler set a goal of increasing CP giving with the deacons, and in 2012 the church jumped from 4 to 6 percent. The congregation has steadily increased by a half percent each year until reaching 8 percent of

undesignated receipts going to the unified missions giving fund today.

One thing Fowler did to make a case for missions giving was to preach a series of messages where he shared that God's people needed a way to support foreign, home and state missions. He then emphasized that they have a way through the Cooperative Program, but need to support it more. The church responded positively and has sacrificially given, even foregoing spending money on themselves to better support missions work around the world.

Presley Lamm has served as pastor of Bell City Church for four years. The church has had a

strong history of Cooperative Program support, but recently had cut its giving due to budget challenges. The church has grown from about 10 people in attendance four years ago to around 90 today.

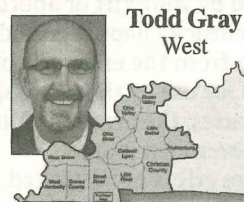
Lamm has taught the members that the Cooperative Program involves their church in missions at home and around the world. He said, "Even though we are small in numbers, we can still give to a program that serves foreign missions, women's ministry, and home missions," mentioning some of the places being reached by CP dollars.

When he came to Bell City, the church was giving to CP at approximately 1 percent of its offerings. Lamm led them to double to 2 percent, and then urged them to further increase the amount to 4 percent last December. His goal is to someday return the church to its historical level of 10 percent to the mission's fund.

The leadership of these pastors, and the willingness of their churches to follow, provide encouragement for other pastors and churches. Here are some takeaways from their examples:

1. The pastor's leadership is crucial. Rarely do churches grow their CP giving unless the pastor, at the least, is on board—and, in most cases, is out in front.

2. Education matters. People need to be reminded of the broad reach of the Cooperative Program. Each of

Regional
SPOTLIGHTTodd Gray
West

Three Graves County Association congregations have increased their support of the Cooperative Program (left to right): Pastor Brad Hall, Sedalia Church; Pastor Presley Lamm, Bell City Church; and Pastor Wes Fowler, First Church, Mayfield.

the three pastors used the pulpit and CP promotional materials to educate their people on the history and usefulness of the SBC's unified mission's fund.

3. Vision matters. Each of these pastors cast a vision of where they felt the church needed to go in terms of CP giving. The churches gladly responded to their leadership.

4. Patience and perseverance are essential. Leadership requires consistency. These pastors understood that an increase in missions giving would not take place overnight, but it could take place over time.

5. Highlight the blessings. These pastors were faithful to remind the church that God is blessing their efforts to give more to missions causes.

6. Spotlight the need. These pastors were also faithful to remind their congregations about the great need to reach the lost and unchurched around their state, the country, and the world. One of the pastors stated that during a budget meeting he had shared, "Unsaved and unengaged people do not make budget requests, and that he was in the finance meeting to represent them."

To their credit, these churches were ready and willing to respond to the leadership of their pastors. People they have never met are being blessed because these pastors led and their churches gladly followed. (WR)

Never too late... to bring back the new again

There comes a desire to discard the old and bring back the new. Cynthia Clawson sang a great number titled, "Bring Back the New Again." I want to bring back the new again.

I take comfort in the statement by the writer, George Eliot: "it is never too late to be what you might have been." Is that true? For I think back on my youthful, pre-heart surgery self, to a young man of deep faith, a Sunday School teacher and deacon, who thought seriously at one time of pursuing a ministerial calling rather than a career in academe.

The son of two honest-to-goodness Baptist saints, the like of which are hard to find in this postmodern world of constant sorrow, I was reared the old way.

I refused and still refuse to place a lesser book on top of Holy Scripture. I participated in Bible drills. I memorized Bible verses in a contest at school led by my seventh grade teacher. And I was reprimanded by my mother and father for having gone into the poolroom three doors down from our family

drugstore on the main drag (Highway 41-A) in Dixon, Ky.

And to be an athlete again. Is it "never too late to be what you might have been?"

In the summer before my sixth grade year I began to play basketball seriously, and then for the next 10 years I literally never quit playing. Every waking hour, I played or was caught up in dreams of playing in high school and then in college.

I want to feel again the sweet, sweet exhaustion of playing basketball for 12 hours on a summer day, taking only short breaks for water and lunch. Or that one snowy Easter Sunday after my father preached the sunrise community service, when I cleared the outdoor court of snow and then tore apart a refrigerator box of cardboard to try to get even better footing, so as not to limit any time away from my individual drills.

I shot baskets for a few hours before Sunday School and our regular worship service at First Baptist.

Several years later, Steve Duncan and I broke into the Webster County

gymnasium to play there during Christmas break. When the principal found us, he saw who we were and turned and walked away. In high school, I threw up before almost every game. I could have been so much better if I had loosened up and simply enjoyed the game that I loved so much.

Then at Belmont University, I finally made it to a college that I learned to love and still love today. There in class and on the court I learned life lessons that served me so well for so long.

The year after I graduated I played on a basketball team, Sports Ambassadors, in the Philippines, an experience that has stayed with me through the years. Of course, then I was young and thought I could do anything. Anything at all.

I married the love of my life, and Evelyn and I had Wesley and Cammie Jo, two perfect children. Of course, I am biased and know my wife and son and daughter are not perfect. They just seem perfect to me. As for me, I always fell far short of the mark, but they loved me anyway. Is it really "never too late to be what you might have been?"

Before and after teaching and coaching in the public schools, I attended

graduate school at Baylor and the University of Kentucky. When I began teaching in colleges—Madisonville Community College in Kentucky and Williams Baptist College in Walnut Ridge, Arkansas—and at Murray State University, I tried to be an energetic scholar, full of vigor, full of promise, and full of the hopes and dreams of any youthful faculty member at the beginning of a career in higher education. I wanted to teach well. I wanted to write books. Good books. I wanted to make a difference. Now, 30 or so years later, that is the person I want to become again, even at this stage in my academic career.

Is it too late? Bring back the new again, I say. Oh, I am not scared to grow old. I just want to regain the urgency and expectancy of those youthful years when I had, as C. S. Lewis put it, "all my road before me."

Even though most of my road is in the rear view mirror, I still believe that it is never too late to bring back the new again.

Duane Bolin teaches in the Department of History at Murray State University and is a member with Evelyn at Murray's First Baptist Church. Contact Duane at jbolin@murraystate.edu

Notes from
the Back Row

Duane Bolin



A Kentucky Baptist Disaster Relief team meets to help with flooding damage in Ruston, La.

Torrential Gulf Coast rains challenge DR vols

Ruston, La.—Damage from torrential Gulf Coast rains recently blanketed parts of Louisiana, Texas and Mississippi leaving the region looking at possibly years of recovery.

Kentucky Baptist Disaster Relief teams are working in Louisiana where storm waters have damaged an estimated 5,000 homes in about 28 parishes, but that number will likely rise. As water recedes in one town and recovery begins, it's likely cresting in another. Some of the state's bigger rivers have yet to crest.

"This flood was not a respecter of any one place or people," said David Abernathy, the Louisiana Baptist Convention's disaster-relief incident commander. "This thing hit everybody. Rivers and lakes are cresting at records never seen before."

By March 1, Abernathy said the challenge was rapidly growing as more reports were coming into the incident command team.

"The scope of the disaster is growing," he said. "We need all the help we can get. We're finding pockets of devastation everywhere. It's hard to wrap your hands around how widespread it is."

Rainfall estimates vary, but Abernathy reports that some Louisiana communities received in excess of 24 inches. The effect has been similar to a hurricane but without the wind, he said. Some officials have called this flood the widest non-hurricane flooding in the state's history.

About 30 Kentucky Baptist volunteers went to Farmerville, located in north central Louisiana on Lake D'Arbonne. The lake crested nearly nine feet above normal, flooding nearby businesses and homes. Kentucky Baptist DR Director Coy Webb said the

volunteers are helping local residents clean up muddy, water-logged homes.

"Many of these folks don't have flood insurance and, right now, their world seems pretty bleak," Webb said. "We want to show them someone cares, and that someone is Jesus Christ."

The Kentucky teams are part of a state-wide disaster relief effort being coordinated by the Southern Baptist Disaster Relief, a division of the North American Mission Board. The volunteers are expected to return March 26.

The flooding in Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi is one of several recent flood events, including incidents in Missouri and South Carolina. The prolonged nature of a widespread flooding event leaves disaster relief leaders in flux as they await assessments. Multiple states have already activated volunteers to assist, mostly in Louisiana. Leaders have mobilized feeding, mud-out, shower and laundry units that are currently operational. Many are serving in smaller communities to allow people there to wash clothes, Abernathy said.

NAMB, which coordinates Southern Baptists' multi-state disaster responses, sent a shipment of supplies on March 14 to Ruston, La. Volunteers there will be receiving flood buckets, water, personal protection equipment, blankets and other essential items.

Kentucky Baptists wishing to donate to disaster relief efforts can contact the state convention at dr@kybaptist.org or call (502) 489-3401 or (866) 489-3527, or they may visit <https://donations.namb.net/dr-donations>. For phone donations, call 1-866-407-NAMB (6262). (BP/KBC)

KBC president: Diversity more than skin color

By Robin Cornetet

Louisville—Skin color isn't the only factor church leaders need to consider when it comes to promoting diversity in Kentucky, the top elected leader of the state's largest religious organization said March 9.

"If we want to look like the New Testament church, then we need to look not only at race and ethnicity but also at economic and social differences," Kentucky Baptist Convention President Kevin Smith told students at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. "Some have to do the heart work and ask: 'Do we even desire that?'"

Smith, the first African-American KBC president, said churches need to examine their communities to determine what groups to reach out to become more diverse.

"We should be asking: '...are we reaching every kindred, tribe and tongue' with the gospel of Jesus Christ?" he said. "Our 2,400 churches are in 2,400 different contexts. Diversity in Florence

will look different than in Louisville."

The U.S. Census Bureau reports that Kentucky's overall population is 88 percent white, 8 percent black, and 4 percent Hispanic and "other." Only three Kentucky counties have populations more than 20 percent black.

"I still preach at churches in the KBC where I'm the first black preacher to have ever preached there," Smith said. "We still have a long way to go, but the way I read the scriptures is we'll be pressing toward the mark until Jesus comes again."

Smith said Christian unity doesn't necessarily mean every congregation will be multi-ethnic.

"There should be diversity in the body of Christ other than ethnic diversity," he said. "Sometimes there are churches where everyone is white in that area, but there is a wide socioeconomic spread. This church might just be an upper-class church and that one a middle-class church. Perhaps they need to pursue economic diversity." (KBC)



KBC resources help churches stress Cooperative Program's importance

Louisville.—With Cooperative Program Sunday only weeks away, churches have the opportunity to remind members who makes it possible for missionaries to change lives with the gospel.

About 980 missionaries will be retiring or voluntarily leaving the International Mission Board this year because the organization has operated with a \$210 million deficit over the past six years.

Kentucky Baptist Convention Executive Director Paul Chitwood said the news serves to stress the vital importance of the Cooperative Program in fulfilling the Great Commission abroad and at home. "When churches give through

the CP, they not only invest in the advance of the gospel in other countries, they invest in the advance of the gospel in their own communities and in neighboring counties and churches," Chitwood said.

The Kentucky Baptist Convention has many resources to help churches promote the Cooperative Program. A number of videos and materials are available for download. Printed materials, such as children's activities books, can be ordered and shipped directly.

Churches can also schedule a KBC representative to speak about the Cooperative Program.

Find out more at www.kybaptist.org/cp. (KBC)



Kentucky Baptist Convention President Kevin Smith, right, addresses diversity in churches at a student initiated discussion at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville March 9. KBC Associate Executive Director Curtis Woods, background on left, moderates the panel discussion that included Nate Bishop, interim pastor at Forest Baptist Church in Louisville, and Jamaal Williams, lead campus pastor at Sojourn Midtown in Louisville. (Photo by Robin Cornetet)

Creativity meets church planting challenges in Montreal

By Jim Burton

Montreal — There may be no city in North America that's more European than Montreal. The French-speaking province of Quebec is fiercely independent-independent to the point that Canada has faced referendums concerning possible secession.

Surrounded by English-speaking Canadian provinces and the United States, Montreal often feels the pressure of more dominant societies. So the city digs in and fiercely stands its ground to protect its culture—one that largely wants little to do with churches.

When Tony Silveira's family arrived in Montreal in 2006, the Portuguese native was not naïve. After starting churches in Toronto for 12 years and assisting with efforts in Montreal, he knew challenges existed in an anti-religion city.

"In general, churches don't have a good reputation," Silveira said. "Religious words are curse words."

A city that he now says is against religion was once nicknamed "the city of 100 bell towers," evidenced by the presence of so many churches. Many were extraordinary cathedrals, some nearly 200 years old, with exquisite architecture. Today, most are empty on Sundays. Many of those bell-tower buildings are now tourist attractions.

Local governments have zoning laws that make locating churches on a main thoroughfare virtually impossible, which calls for creativity.

South Shore community

Montreal's regional population of more than 5 million people (with the core city occupying an island, much like Manhattan) is bounded on the south by the St. Lawrence River. The South Shore community where Silveira is church planting has about 1.5 million residents.

While permits for churches in high-traffic areas are impractical, municipalities are anxious for commerce. Silveira found prime real estate that has an estimated 200,000 cars passing every day and started The Studio, a convention center venue for business seminars and meetings—and churches.

"It looks more like a Starbucks than a church," Silveira said. "It's cozy—not too big."

Creating a business center aligned with Silveira's objective to reach marketplace leaders and university students. Besides community and business events, the venue now hosts six churches, three of which he started. The Studio doubles as a multi-congregational site. Each pays rent to make the location viable.

Research reflects Montreal's ambivalence toward Christianity. While some statistics say less than .5 percent are Christian, Silveira believes it's closer to 7 or 8 percent.

"The gospel is growing very fast here," he said.

That growth stems partly from youth rebellion, as teenagers and young adults often do the opposite of their parents during that stage of life.

"Millennials are where I see the best potential for growth," Silveira said.

"Their parents are anti-church, and, naturally, when they go through the rebellious stages, they will look for church."

Churches across Montreal

Silveira brought about 27 years of church planting experience to Montreal from his work in Europe and Toronto. But he knew nothing about the North American Mission Board, Send North America or the farm system.

That knowledge changed when he met Jacques Avakian, NAMB's lead church planting catalyst for Quebec. Silveira's introduction to the farm system, NAMB's method for identifying and mentoring potential church planters, aligned with his vision and experience.

"I listened to his story and the vision God had given him," Avakian said. "I loved what I heard."

Meanwhile, Silveira was pleased to learn about what was already happening in Montreal.

"I was so touched by seeing the other church plants that NAMB has here," Silveira said. "The farm system was the first time I've ever heard about it. It's the best church planting model I've seen in the world."

"I started Passion Canada to mentor church planters," Silveira said of his registered ministry.

Passion Canada is the umbrella organization under which Silveira plants churches and is a mentor. With The Studio, he's created a reproducible model.

"He is very creative," Avakian said. "His whole church planting strategy speaks for itself."

Silveira preaches at the 9:30 a.m. English multi-cultural service called The Church Unlimited. At 11:15 a.m., there's a French-speaking congregation called La 180 Zone. Then at 6:30 p.m., an English service called WeR1 (We Are One) has mostly youth and young adults.

"I'm about to launch two other churches through the Passion Center," said Silveira, who intended to start six new churches by the end of 2015. (He calls The Studio the Passion Center when it's hosting churches.)

Meanwhile, he preaches every other week at a Mohawk First Nations church on the South Shore, and, when possible, he travels to Northern Quebec to minister to the Cree tribe.

The average giving of a Christian Quebec church member is \$7 per week, Silveira said, which necessitates the business model he's chosen. His only other financial support comes from NAMB through the Cooperative Program and Annie Armstrong Easter Offering®.

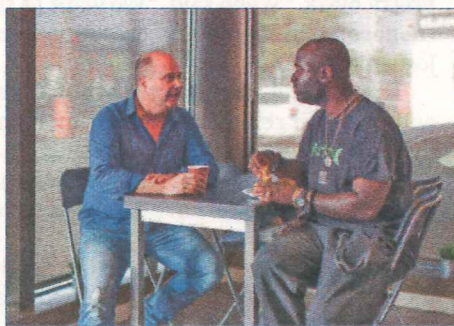
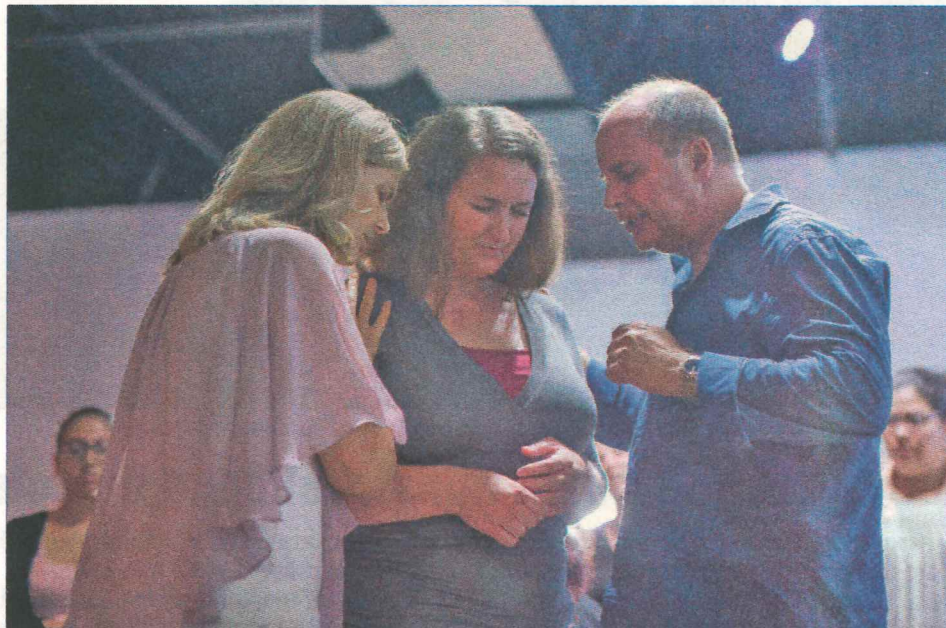
"Without the CP and AAEO, I would not be where I am now," Silveira said.

That stability also allows him to plan proactively.

"My vision is to multiply what we have here," Silveira said. "I don't see that the next generation wants a mega church. What I foresee is opening multiple locations where 300 people can still do community. The next generation also isn't likely to want bell towers, preferring a simpler organic church model built on user-friendly evangelism, discipleship and fellowship."

"I would like to expand the model with different flavors and styles of churches in different regions of Montreal." (NAMB)

Jim Burton is a photojournalist and writer living in Atlanta.



Top: Church planter Tony Silveira prays with church members at a recent worship service in Montreal. Silveira is currently pastoring several church plants in the Montreal area. **Bottom Left:** From the homeless population to high-powered businessmen, Tony Silveira's location along a main thoroughfare affords him the opportunity to meet and minister to a variety of people. The Silveiras are North American Mission Board 2016 Week of Prayer Missionaries. **Bottom Right:** Tony and Sara Silveira are leading a church plant in Montreal, along with daughter, Sara, and son Andrew. The Silveiras also have an older adult son, David.

ANNIE ARMSTRONG EASTER OFFERING®



Church planter Tony Silveira has extensive church planting experience in difficult mission fields like Montreal, and the compassion to help reach families.

Budget shortfall hampers 3 in 10 churches

By Bob Smietana

Nashville—When it comes to finances, the new normal for many American churches seems to be “just getting by.”

A third of Protestant senior pastors say their church's giving was under budget in 2015, according to LifeWay Research.

One in five saw their finances decline.

Overall, about half of pastors say the economy has negatively affected their churches.

Scott McConnell, associate director of LifeWay Research, says pastors are still uneasy about their church's finances.

“Wages grew in 2015 and inflation and unemployment remained low,” McConnell said, “yet the financial picture for many churches did not improve.”

LifeWay Research has polled Protestant pastors about their churches and the economy since 2009. During that time, pastors reported the sluggish economy's toll on their churches has lessened.

In October 2010, most pastors (80 percent) said the economy negatively impacted their church. That number dropped to 64 percent in 2012 and then 56 percent by 2014.

The most recent telephone survey of 1,000 Protestant senior pastors found 51 percent said the economy is hurting their church—the lowest total since LifeWay began researching the topic. One in 8 (13 percent) say the economy had a positive effect on their church.

About 3 in 10 pastors (32 percent) say their church failed to make budget. That's an improvement over 2010 (46 percent), according to LifeWay Research, but an increase over 2012 (22 percent) in budget shortfalls.

In the most recent survey, larger churches fared better than smaller churches. About a third of churches with 100 or more people (32 percent) saw their offerings exceed budget expectations. Among churches of fewer than 100, 1 in 5 (21 percent) had higher than budgeted offerings.

LifeWay Research also asked pastors if offerings at their church increased, remained the same or declined over the past year.

For the most part, pastors say giving remained steady. Offerings went up in 4 of 10 churches (41 percent). Three in 10 (29 percent) saw no change. One in 5 (21 percent) saw a decline.

LifeWay Research's report echoes the findings of other studies. The Giving USA report by the Chronicle of Philanthropy found giving to churches and other religious causes has lagged in recent years. While charitable giving overall increased by 5.4 percent in 2014, according to Giving USA, giving to religious causes like churches grew by less than 1 percent.

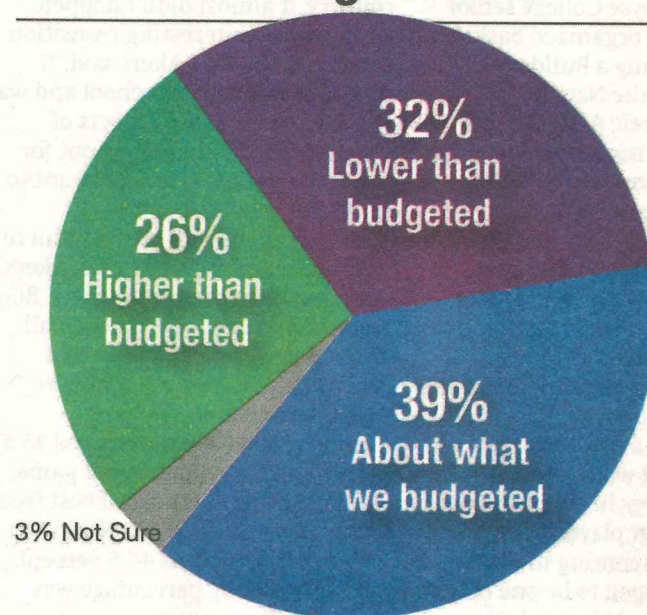
Giving to churches and other faith-based causes now makes up about a third of charitable giving (32 percent) in the U.S.—down from 56 percent in the 1980s, according to the Chronicle of Philanthropy. A recent Faith Communities Today report found the median church budget fell from \$150,000 in 2009 to \$125,000 in 2014.

McConnell said not all the financial struggles churches face can be blamed on the economy.

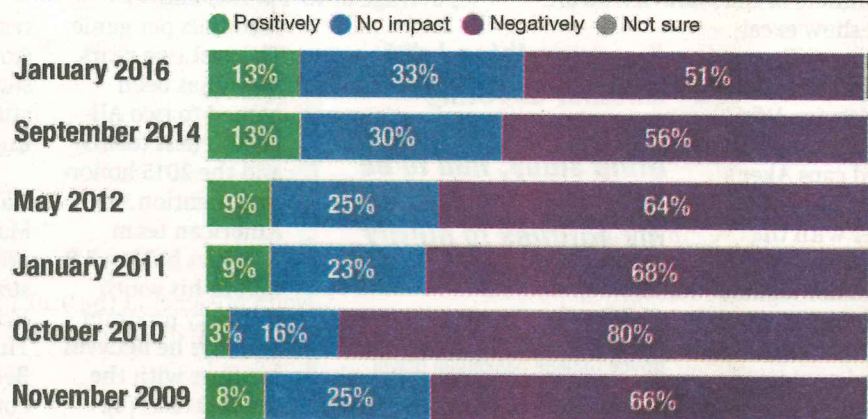
“Many factors affect a church's finances,” he said, citing such factors as attendance trends, spiritual growth and good stewardship. (BP)

Among Protestant Pastors

At the end of 2015, church offerings were...



How is the current economy impacting your church?



Tennessee pastor Gaines to be nominated for SBC president

By David Roach

St. Louis—Tennessee pastor Steve Gaines will be nominated for president of the Southern Baptist Convention, Georgia pastor Johnny Hunt announced March 9.

“When Steve Gaines shared his prayer journey he and (his wife) Donna had travelled, I was touched by his clear call to allow himself to be nominated,” Hunt, pastor of First Baptist Church in Woodstock, Ga., wrote in a news release stating his intention to nominate Gaines during the SBC annual meeting June 14-15 in St. Louis.

“Steve struggled with this nomination as he has always believed this office should seek the man,” Hunt continued. “With such a passionate desire for spiritual revival in our churches and nation, and knowing him to be a man of deep intense prayer, it brings joy to my heart to nominate Dr. Gaines.”

During the 11 years Gaines has been pastor of the Memphis-area Bellevue Baptist Church in Cordova, Tenn., the congregation has averaged 481 baptisms per year, according to the SBC's Annual Church Profile.

Previously, he was pastor of churches in Alabama, Tennessee and Texas.



Steve Gaines

Bellevue's finance committee is recommending that the congregation give \$1 million during its 2016-17 church year through the Cooperative Program.

Southern Baptists' unified channel for funding state- and SBC-level missions and ministries. That will total approximately 4.6 percent of undesignated receipts, the church told Baptist Press.

As of April 1, 2012, Bellevue began forwarding all of its CP giving through the Tennessee Baptist Convention, the church said. Previously, it forwarded approximately \$200,000-\$340,000 annually in CP through the TBC, according to ACP data, and designated about twice that amount to be forwarded to the SBC Executive Committee for distribution according to the CP allocation formula, the church said.

The shift in giving methods resulted in an increase from giving 1.3 percent of undesignated receipts through CP in 2011 to 2.6 percent in 2012, according to ACP reports.

Bellevue increased that percentage to 3.5 in 2013 and 3.8 in 2014. Between 2011 and 2016, the church has increased its CP giving by 278 percent, according to BP's calculations.

The church's Great Commission Giving totaled approximately \$2.5 million

over the past two years and is anticipated to be \$1.3 million (6 percent of undesignated receipts) for the congregation's 2016-17 church year, which begins April 1, Hunt said. Great Commission Giving is a category of giving established by SBC action in 2011 that encompasses giving through CP as well as direct gifts to SBC entities, associational giving and giving to state convention ministries.

Hunt said Bellevue has collaborated with the International Mission Board to lead evangelism training in 34 countries since 2007 and “at the request of the IMB ... has been a strategy church for Jinotega, Nicaragua, since 2007.” The church also reported a \$150,000 gift to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions last year and anticipated an equal gift for 2016.

Bellevue is partnering with the North American Mission Board to plant churches in the Northwest and has planted 10 churches in other areas, including work with Native Americans in three locations, Hunt said.

Total missions giving for next year is anticipated at 18 percent of Bellevue's undesignated receipts, the church reported, and includes the “Bellevue Loves Memphis” initiative, a service evangelism campaign launched by Gaines in 2007.

Through Bellevue Loves Memphis, Hunt wrote, “the church has demonstrated love for their city through meeting practical needs as a platform from

which to share the gospel. Thus far, they have held 33 workdays. Their volunteers numbering 30,000 have served 106,505 ‘man hours’ on 945 projects resulting in 510 professions of faith.”

Gaines has served as a member of the SBC Committee on Nominations, a trustee of LifeWay Christian Resources, a member of the committee that proposed a revision of the Baptist Faith and Message in 2000 and chairman of the SBC Resolutions Committee. He preached the SBC convention sermon in 2004 and served as SBC Pastors' Conference president in 2005.

Gaines told BP, “I would like to continue (current SBC president) Dr. (Ronnie) Floyd's emphasis on seeking God for a spiritual awakening and revival. ... I've been praying for an awakening for a long time, and that's really my heart. I want the manifest presence of God in our churches and also in our denomination.”

“... I also believe that we've got a real problem with our baptisms,” Gaines said. “We need to get back to personal evangelism and soul winning.”

Gaines' presidential nomination is the second to be announced for the SBC annual meeting. North Carolina pastor J.D. Greear's nomination was announced March 2.

Gaines is married to Donna and has four children and nine grandchildren. He holds master of divinity and doctor of philosophy degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. (BP)

Boyce senior from Danville nets NCCAA basketball award

By Robert Chapman

Louisville—A Boyce College senior who never played organized basketball before, donning a Bulldogs uniform, took home the National Christian College Athletic Association's top award for Division II athletes, the organization announced March 8.

Ben Akers, a senior forward from Danville is the first Boyce player to win the Pete Maravich Memorial Award, given annually to the most outstanding student-athlete in NCCAA men's basketball. Akers is a member of Calvary Baptist Church in Danville.

"Ben has been a great example of the fact that hard work pays off," said Boyce Bulldogs head coach Blake Rogers. "Ben never played organized basketball before coming to Boyce, but he has developed to be one of the best 3-point shooters in our league and has consistently led the nation in 3-points made."

Winners of the Maravich award must show excellence in skills, academics, and Christian service. Winning the Maravich award caps Akers' record-setting career with the Bulldogs, one which had humble beginnings.

Because he never played organized basketball before coming to Boyce, during his freshman season Akers played only 12 minutes a game and was hesitant to shoot. While Akers finished his

career as team captain and one of the leading 3-point shooters in the country, it almost didn't happen.

"It was an interesting transition playing for Boyce," Akers said. "I played tennis in high school and was not used to the team aspects of sports. I almost did not try out for the team, because I did not want to sit on the bench."

After the coaches pushed him to work on his basketball skills, Akers developed as a premier shooter. Rogers, who has been Akers coach all four seasons, says he hopes that other Boyce players will emulate Akers' work ethic.

This season, Akers averaged 15.5 points and 6.6 rebounds per game. He finished with the third-best free throw percentage in the NCCAA at 84.2 percent, and his 44.5 percent 3-point shooting percentage was eighth in the country.

For his career, Akers scored 1,569 points and grabbed 670 rebounds for an average of 13.4 points and 3.7

rebounds per game. The past two years, Akers has been named to two All-Region first teams and the 2015 honorable mention All-American team.

Akers holds a 3.0 GPA in his youth ministry program and says he believes his time with the Bulldogs has pre-

pared him for ministry as a youth pastor.

"The work I put in during my first year set a pattern I can follow for the



Boyce College senior Ben Akers is the school's first recipient of the NCCAA Division II Pete Maravich Memorial Award. (Photo by Emil Handke)

rest of my life," Akers said. "I understood that everything I did, whether shooting 3-pointers or leading a Bible study, had to be done with the best of my abilities to glorify God."

The NCCAA award is named after Hall of Fame basketball player Pete Maravich, considered one of the best offensive talents in history. After his storied NBA career, "Pistol Pete" Maravich professed faith in Christ. The award is sponsored by Gary Beck, manager of the Gary Beck Foundation and a former NCCAA All-American student-athlete.

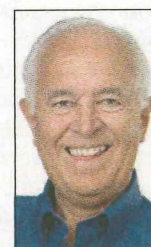
Boyce College is the undergraduate school of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. (SBTS)

Marriage & Family's Gary Smalley dies

Branson—Gary Smalley, 75, a self-effacing yet prolific author and auditorium-packing speaker on "Marriage and the Family," died March 6 in Branson, Mo.

"Gary Smalley was a tremendous communicator and personality," said Ronnie Floyd, president of the Southern Baptist Convention and senior pastor of Cross Church in north-west Arkansas.

"When he spoke at our church, the place was packed, people were helped and hundreds of marriages were enriched. His impact was huge in every way. Thank God for his legacy that will live on through thousands upon thousands of people," Floyd told Baptist Press.



Gary Smalley

Smalley authored 60-plus books with 6 million in sales. He taped numerous videos, led conferences in churches across the country and joined with other authors and speakers in various projects, such as resources to help people find freedom from pornography and other sexual sin by the ministry Freedom Begins Here.

Jim Daly, president of Focus on the Family, said Smalley also was "a trusted counselor in whom people confided their deepest longings, hurts, hopes and dreams. The practical advice and coaching he gave helped countless husbands and wives stave off divorce. How many children grew up with both their mom and their dad because God used Gary to repair and restore their marriages? More than you would imagine."

Smalley was a guest on Focus on the Family's broadcast more than 50 times, Daly said in a March 7 posting at focusonthefamily.com, noting, "I especially loved Gary's sense of humor. He took the subject of marriage and family seriously, but he didn't take himself too seriously."

Smalley's son Greg, Focus on the Family's vice president of marriage ministries, said in comments to Daly, "I loved my dad's authenticity and transparency. He made a living telling people how he messed up as a husband and father. He was humble enough to admit he made mistakes and driven to learn how to grow as a follower of Christ, husband and father. ... (W)ho my dad was up on stage was exactly who he was at home."

Attending his father's events as a child, Greg Smalley said he was often told by people, "Your dad saved my marriage."

Gary Chapman, another marriage and family author—notably "The Five Love Languages"—and conference speaker, recounted to Baptist Press, "People often got the two of us confused. I once told him that people would come to me to autograph his books. I said, 'Early on, I told them that I was not Gary Smalley, but Gary Chapman, and they would be embarrassed. So, now I don't say a word, I just sign your name.'"

"We had a good laugh. If people are going to confuse me with someone, I don't know of a better choice than Gary Smalley," Chapman, who also is senior associate pastor at Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, N.C., told BP.

Among Smalley's popular books were "If He Only Knew: What No Woman Can Resist"; "Making Love Last Forever"; "The Key to Your Child's Heart"; and with John Trent, "The Blessing: Giving the Gift of Unconditional Love and Acceptance" and "The Two Sides of Love," both Gold Medallion Award recipients from the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association.

Smalley's media appearances included "The Today Show," "Fox & Friends," "The Oprah Winfrey Show" and "Larry King Live."

In addition to Norma, his wife of 52 years, and son Greg, Smalley is survived by another son, Michael and a daughter, Kari, who both work in publishing and counseling; and seven grandchildren. (BP)

Smith named National Religious Broadcasters communications VP

Manassas, Va.—Veteran Southern Baptist communicator James Smith Sr. has been named as National Religious Broadcasters vice president of communications, effective March 1.

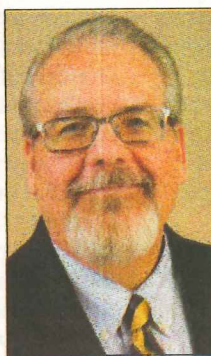
NRB President Jerry Johnson, stated in a news release, "Since NRB is a media association, building a first-class communications team must be our highest priority. Jim Smith's proven track record as a media leader makes him the right man, at the right time, for all the right reasons."

Smith, 51, has been executive editor and chief spokesman for Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., since June 2013, having previously served at the seminary from 1997-2001, both times overseeing editorial content of the seminary's publications, supervising the seminary's news operation and leading public and media relations.

Smith was executive editor of the Florida Baptist Witness, newsjournal of the Florida Baptist State Convention, from 2001-2013, and was the 2011-2012 president of the Association of State Baptist Publications, the

fellowship of Southern Baptist newspaper editors.

In Smith's 12 years at the Witness, he emphasized coverage of missions, theology and moral concerns and wrote editorials that took a conservative position on issues within the denomination and in the broader culture.



Jim Smith

In his role with NRB, which is a new position for the organization, Smith will lead all communications related to NRB's mission to advance biblical truth, promote media excellence and defend free speech.

Johnson said Smith's "expertise in the evangelical world and the Washington, D.C., public policy scene are a perfect fit for NRB. He knows the NRB landscape and has already helped us on special projects, such as the 2015 and 2016 annual conventions."

Smith was the first Washington staff member of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, serving from 1989-1995, and

was director of communications for the Republican Study Committee in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1987-1989.

NRB, located in Manassas, Va., in the Washington area, has grown from 150 radio broadcasters at its founding in 1944 to more than 1,200 members with a weekly cumulative listenership/readership of more than 60 million, covering the full range of communications platforms.

Smith stated in the news release that NRB "serves Christian communicators in a way that cannot be done by any other organization."

"With mounting cultural challenges, NRB's ministry has never been more vital, especially because of our members' uncompromising commitment to the unchanging gospel message that is the only hope for humanity."

An ordained Southern Baptist minister who has served also in pastoral ministry, Smith holds a master of divinity degree from Southern Seminary and a bachelor's degree from Dallas Baptist University.

He and his wife Linda have two adult children, James Andrew Smith Jr. and Lauren Garner, and two grandchildren. (BP)

Southern Heights using Upward ministry to partner with Baptist Global Response

By Myriah Snyder

Russellville—Upwards basketball and cheerleading ministry at Southern Heights Baptist Church of Russellville has taken on a mission project to provide clean water by purchasing wells through Baptist Global Response.

The church is raising funds for the wells by selling water at concessions during Upward's games. Barry McReynolds, Upward commissioner for Southern Heights, and his daughter, Courtney, thought of the project while she was looking through a BGR catalogue after church on missions emphasis Sunday.

"We could buy a well for a missions project this year. But, Dad, they cost \$1,000 each. Do you think we could raise that much?" Courtney asked.

"After we talked a bit longer, both of us felt impressed that God was leading us in this direction," McReynolds said.

During the first Upward game of the year, they began to sell water bottles the church donated so that all proceeds went

straight to the mission project. In addition, they didn't have a set price for the water.

"We felt God could work through the generosity of His church by asking for donations," McReynolds said.

Overall, the church has raised \$6,008, enough for six wells and filters.

The final Upward game took place on March 19. An awards service was held that evening, and a representative of Baptist Global Response attended to receive the check during the celebration.

McReynolds continued, "The generosity of God's people has been on vivid display. We have had several donations where the donor has given hilariously."

People outside the Upward ministry and the church family have donated to the cause as well.

"I think our church wants to be biblical Christians and serve the Lord, and they understand the call to be an outward focused people, a missional people. In our attempt to be obedient to the Lord, He just blessed it and provided,"



Terry and Darla Heeringa from BGR receive the church's donation. Presenting the check is Barry McReynolds.

said Jered Patrick, pastor of Southern Heights.

"It's been really cool to see the Lord work and people be generous," he said.

Patrick added, "We understand the greatest need. Obviously, we want to meet physical needs, but the great thing about being Southern Baptist is that we use physical needs to break barriers in order to get to the spiritual needs, which

is the gospel to be taken to all nations. That's played a role in God's plan of redeeming His people across the world."

Regardless of how many wells are purchased, God will be glorified, and Southern Heights will have had the opportunity to give water in His name.

"I can think of no better way to invest in the life of our church and our Upward families," McReynolds concluded. (WR)

'Religious liberty' bill passes Georgia House, Senate

Atlanta—The Georgia General Assembly passed an amended "Free Exercise Protection Act" March 16 that now heads to an uncertain fate with the state's Republican governor.

Capping two years of lobbying efforts by groups including the 1.3-million-member Georgia Baptist Convention, the compromise measure passed by the House and Senate states that pastors cannot be forced to perform a same-sex wedding ceremony if doing so would violate their sincerely held beliefs, nor can anyone be forced to attend one.

It guarantees that no faith-based organization shall be required to rent, lease or otherwise grant permission for property to be used for an event the group finds objectionable.

It also allows faith-based organizations to hire and fire based on an employee's religious beliefs.

It adds language used in the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act, allowing the government to infringe on an individual's religious liberty only for a compelling reason and by the least restrictive means.

It also states that nothing in the law should be construed to permit discrimination on any grounds prohibited by state or federal law.

Gov. Nathan Deal, a member of First Baptist Church in Gainesville, Ga., said previously he would veto any measure that allows discrimination in order to protect people of faith.

Pundits say it is unclear if the version that passed the legislature will satisfy those concerns.

The Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest LGBT-rights organization, said the bill could undermine local non-discrimination ordinances, permit hospitals to refuse to provide medically necessary care and allow a taxpayer-funded service provider to discriminate by denying a job because of the applicant's religion, sexual orientation or gender identity.

Corporations including Microsoft, Google, Coca-Cola and Home Depot all have expressed qualms about the bill, saying it would harm the state's economy. (BGN)

In new book, Hawkins redefines 'VIP'

By Roy Hayhurst

Dallas—GuideStone President O.S. Hawkins, a golfer since boyhood, says his favorite holes to play are the par threes. "It only takes one really good shot out of three to make par," Hawkins noted.

But while one good shot out of three can lead to success on a golf course par three, it doesn't lead to success for influential people, he acknowledged. It takes all three factors—vision, integrity and purpose—to be men and women of influence. That's the thesis behind Hawkins' newest book, "VIP: How to Influence with Vision, Integrity, and Purpose." Hawkins said influential people must possess a clear vision, high integrity and a God-given purpose that drives them each and every day.

Acronyms, Hawkins noted in the book, are an everyday part of life for English speakers.

"In elementary school, our parents joined the PTA," Hawkins writes.

"When we hoped to get into the college of our choice to earn a BA, we paid careful attention to our GPA and studied hard for the SAT. Sportscasters talk about a pitcher's ERA, a hitter's RBI or a kicker's PAT. In the business world, we speak of men and women who are CEOs, COOs or CFOs who are CPAs. In the health arena, men need to check their PSA. We communicate with FAQ, FYI and IMO while sitting at the lunch counter ordering a BLT.

"Perhaps no other single acronym has muscled and maneuvered its way into our mainline English vernacular like VIP (very important person)," Hawkins noted. "Being important seems to be the personal goal of many who climb from rung to rung up the ladder of perceived success. We've seen too often it raise its ugly head in business, in athletics, politics and even ecclesiastical circles."

Given the dangers of seeking to become very important people, Hawkins said he wants to redefine the

VIP acronym to reflect "Very Influential People."

Citing 2 Corinthians 10:13, 15 (ESV), where Paul says we should "boast only with regard to the area of influence God assigned to us" and that "our area of influence among you may be greatly enlarged," Hawkins said that everyone has a specific area of influence assigned by God. And becoming a Very Influential Person—a true VIP—requires vision, integrity and purpose.

Vision: People of influence know where they are going

"Those who create a winsome and lasting influence on the people around them are men and women of vision," Hawkins said. "People with influence can definitely answer 'where am I headed?'"

Hawkins noted that everybody, from the biggest names in the world to people whose spheres of influence may be much smaller, has someone to influence like no one else can.

Integrity: People of influence know who they are

"People who influence others for good are men and women of impeccable integrity," Hawkins writes.

Integrity's role is important in the four spheres of life: a private world, alone with God; a personal world, shared with family and a few close friends; a professional world, connecting at work, school, church or socially; and a public world, interacting with the world at large.

"Some people think integrity is rooted in the public world, but its presence or absence is only revealed there, for our good and God's glory," Hawkins said. "Some people maintain that integrity is rooted in the professional world, but it is only reinforced there. Some people insist integrity is rooted in those close, interpersonal relationships of our personal world, but it's only reflected there."

"Integrity is rooted in the private world: alone, between a person and



How to Influence with Vision, Integrity, and Purpose

O.S. HAWKINS

God," he said.

Purpose: People of influence know why they are here

Hawkins noted that epitaphs often reveal an individual's earthly purpose posthumously. Hawkins specifically pointed to what Paul said of King David: "When David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep" (Acts 13:36, NIV).

"Could any better words be written on our own tombstones than these?" Hawkins asked. "People of influence must be people who are driven and directed by a focused purpose in life."

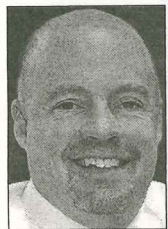
Like all of Hawkins' books, author proceeds from sales benefit Mission:Dignity, the GuideStone ministry that provides financial assistance to retired Southern Baptist pastors and their widows near the poverty line. The book, released March 8, is available from popular online and brick-and-mortar bookstores.

The book has been identified as a good gift for graduates from all levels of school: Liberty University has ordered thousands of copies to be given to each of its graduates. Some churches and other schools have indicated a desire to purchase the book for their own graduates, and businesses can use it for people in sales and other important roles. (BP)

Rejected but resurrected

I love my three children beyond measure, and I continue to grow to love our Oneida students in the same way. I really do believe in my heart that I would take a bullet for

This is Oneida



Larry Gritton

any Oneida kid, just the same as I would for my own children.

My daughter recently appeared in my office after school distraught. She had been rejected for something she wanted to be a part of. My children have experienced other disappointments and rejections in their short lives, but this one seemed different. Perhaps it was because I could

see how hurt my daughter was, or perhaps it was something else.

My first inclination was to rescue my daughter. After speaking with my wife and seeing how much she hurt for our daughter, I was even more inclined to act. After all, I am the school's president and could rescue

her should I so choose to do so, right? I didn't overstep my bounds, but rather tried to simply act as a loving parent and to use the moment to teach.

Reflecting on my daughter's rejection led me to think about the rejection many of our students at Oneida have experienced in their young lives. The day after my daughter's tough day, I watched our students pile out of chapel, and I was reminded just how much hurt, pain and rejection many of them have experienced.

Adults often make poor choices and kids are usually left to pick up the pieces of their shattered lives. Sometimes kids make poor choices as well and then must deal with the consequences of those choices.

While my daughter's recent rejection was difficult to accept, I do realize her rejection pales in comparison to many of the things our Oneida students have experienced. I wish I could rescue all of our students from their hurt and pain, but I know I can't. I do,

however, know the One who can. Jesus is able, ready and willing to rescue us all. As we celebrate Easter, we should be reminded that it is the resurrection that rescues us from sin.

As a parent it is my job to help my daughter overcome her rejection, and it is the calling of our faculty and staff to help our students to overcome as well. Graduation is fast approaching and we have plans to send 56 graduates off to engage the culture for Christ. I want to invite you to come May 14 at 1 p.m. for this celebration, this day of overcoming rejection and challenges.

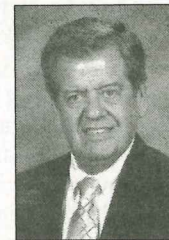
Call me any time if you think you would like to come. Your love, prayers and partnership with the Oneida ministry have enabled us to help our young people overcome trials and rejection, and for that we are grateful.

Larry Gritton Jr. is president of Oneida Baptist Institute. Website: oneidaschool.org. Phone: (606) 847-4111. Follow OBI on Facebook at www.facebook.com/OBI.KY and Twitter, @Oneida_Baptist and @lgritton.

Central City pastor dies from extended illness

Central City—Bob Lowery, 65, of Central City, formerly of Princeton, passed away March 6 at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville, Tenn., following a three-year battle with cancer.

He was a retired Kentucky Baptist minister, having served four churches—Bainbridge Grove in Christian County, Concord in Hopkinsville, Barbourville First, and Central City First.



Bob Lowery

Lowery was a member of the Mission Board of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, chairman of the KBC Business and Finance Committee, and served on the Administrative Committee.

"Bob loved evangelism and missions and led his churches to outstanding support of the Cooperative Program and other mission programs," said David Royalty, pastor of First Baptist Church of Joelton, Tenn. "Bob was a dear friend and fought a courageous battle. He spoke the truth without hesitancy."

Survivors include his wife, Charlotte Rowland Lowery of Central City; father, Pete Lowery of Princeton; two sons, Jason Lowery of Eddyville, and Eric Lowery, of Frankfort; two grandchildren; and two sisters, Margie Lewis, of Princeton, and Teri Herbert, of Denver, Colo. He was preceded in death by his mother, Edna Oliver Lowery.

Funeral services were held March 9 with David Royalty officiating and Chase Thompson assisting. (WR)

Floyd names Committee on Committees

St. Louis—Two Kentuckians are among appointments to the Southern Baptist Convention's Committee on Committees announced March 14 by SBC President Ronnie Floyd.

Curtis Woods, of Watson Memorial Baptist Church, Louisville, and John Flores, of Highview Baptist Church, Louisville, will serve on the 68-member committee comprised of two persons from each of the 34 states and regions qualified for representation.

Floyd named Willy Rice, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Clearwater, Fla., to serve as chairman. Ed Litton, senior pastor of Redemption Church in Saraland, Ala., will serve as vice chairman.

The Committee on Committees will assemble in St. Louis just prior to the SBC's June 14-15 sessions to nominate members of the Committee on Nominations who, in turn, nominate trustees for the boards of SBC entities. (BP)

International student perseveres against all odds (Part III)

One of our international students is Shamma Lorrean from Haiti. He completes his testimony in this article about how God used his circumstances to bring him to Clear Creek.

Clear Creek Chronicle



Donnie Fox

"I am concerned about educating Christian leaders in Haiti, teaching pastors and staff members, because a lot of them have gotten the Good News of Jesus Christ really wrong, and they are spreading it to their churches," said Shamma. "I am also extremely thankful to Clear

Creek alumni Stephen and Sheri Thomas, Kevin Bruns, current student Rachel Allen, along with Dr. Dee Wilson's family and Mike Mills, who were among those who suggested... to come

to Clear Creek. I feel at peace here.

"Classes have been fun for me because I have gotten to have some wonderful experiences but they have also been a challenge because of the language barrier," said Shamma.

"Thanks be to God for some very kind people in the faculty, staff and students, who embraced and supported me. Now everything is better than when I started. These people helped me to become confident and motivated. As the Bible said in Jeremiah 29:11, God has a plan for me to give me a future and a hope. I claim this now as God's grace and it is enough for me.

"My favorite classes are Old Testament 1, New Testament 1 and Introduction to Missions," said Shamma. "These classes are awesome. The OT1 and NT1 teachers are superb for

educating you if you are interested in teaching the Bible and the missions teacher shares real facts about the life of a missionary. I am excited to see what God has in store for me to do after my study.

"Clear Creek is more than just a Bible College; it is a family and a place of great fellowship," said Shamma. "I am in love with this place! I feel tranquil with everything about it. The knowledge is great and adequate, the people are nice. Best of all, I believe when I graduate from Clear Creek, I will be well prepared to love God and His people through the preparation I received here.

"For me, it is the best place to be right now."

Donnie Fox is president of Clear Creek Baptist Bible College, 300 Clear Creek Road, Pineville, KY 40377; toll-free: (866) 340-3196; ccbbc.edu; email: dfox@ccbbc.edu.

Heading into our 'busy season'

March begins the busy season for Kentucky WMU. The Eliza Broadus Offering will be at work over the next few months as we provide a variety of missions experiences for all ages. Thank you for giving and helping us inspire a new generation to

"reach Kentucky and the world for Christ," the challenge of our KBC mission statement.

The season began with the Creative Ministries Festival, March 11-12, at Rich Pond Baptist Church. Students and leaders gathered to not only learn new skills in creative arts, but every participant attended a

"Sharing Your Faith" class. We are serious about the importance of evangelism and missions even when doing puppets, clowning, mime, balloons, improvisation, juggling, and drama.

Boys and leaders gathered on

March 19 for RAMCON, our state Royal Ambassador Missions Congress. There the boys learned about missions from Chris Clarke who works with cowboy churches and equestrian ministries. They also met Robert and Sandy Davis who have served in Senegal and Uganda for many years. There were new challenges this year including Line Gliders and Turtle Races, as well as favorites like Royal Racers and Pit Stop Challenge.

Adult Changers, a unique Kentucky Changers opportunity, will gather at Camp Joy in Brownsville, March 31-April 2, to help with repairs to the camp facility. This will help us more effectively reach children this summer and share the gospel with them. Our thanks to the 30-plus adults who are coming at their own expense to help.

The Kentucky WMU Missions Celebration and Annual Meeting will be April 8-9 at First Baptist Church of

Madisonville. You can learn about many different ways that EBO is at work by attending missionary conferences and visiting in our display area. EBO recipients received a special ribbon to place on their displays. Many of the featured conferences are about ministries that can be done in other places. Make this a time to not only learn how EBO dollars are at work, but come for new ministry ideas to take home.

After the annual meeting we have retreats, associational leadership training, Mission Adventure for Kentucky Kids, Kentucky Changers, Camp Overnights for girls, Camp Courage for boys, and Excel WMU leadership training in the summer. Yes, EBO is at work through Kentucky WMU and the outcomes just keep growing!

Joy Bolton is executive director-treasurer of Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union, P.O. Box 436569, Louisville, KY 40253; (502) 489-3534; kywmu.org

EBO at Work



Joy Bolton

Download Our Free Church-Bus Buyers Guide.



THEBUSCENTER.com
Endorsed by LifeWay
CHRISTIAN STORES



Left: Pray4EveryHome's technology allows a church member to better understand her community and even pray by name for neighbors she has yet to meet. **Right:** As church members have prayed by name for their neighbors, doors have opened for spiritual conversations and people are coming to faith in Christ. (Photos by Marc Hooks/Collin Baptist Association)

Data-driven strategy focuses on prayer, evangelism

Mark Kelly

McKinney, Texas—Pastor Louis Rosenthal sits at his desk, praying through a list of one hundred names from his neighborhood in McKinney, Texas.

He had printed the list from Pray4EveryHome.com, a tool his congregation uses to pray specifically—by name—for all their neighbors.

Afterward, Pastor Louis makes a lunchtime run to the store. As he stands in the checkout line, he notices a woman nearby is crying softly. Pastor Louis asks if he can help.

After a few moments' earnest conversation, he leads the woman to faith in Christ. As Pastor Louis heads back to his office, he is praising God for the unexpected "divine appointment."

Along the way, however, the woman's name keeps bobbing around in his head. Why is it so familiar?

When he gets back to his desk, he realizes: She was one of the one hundred people for whom he had just been praying.

Stories like this are surfacing continually in McKinney, ever since Collin Baptist Association launched the Pray4EveryHome (P4EH) tool two years ago, said Vince Smith, the association's director of missions.

Smith was new in his role, and the association's 135 congregations had just finished a self-assessment exercise with the North American Mission Board that showed the churches had two crying needs: implementing vision and prayer.

"And that was true in not just the life

of our churches, but in the prayer lives of our pastors," Smith said. "Of course, we know prayer is what moves the hand of God. I saw that as something we needed to work on."

'Born out of desperation'

It was no mere coincidence, Smith felt, that at the same time Collin Association was confronting the need for better prayer, Southern Baptist Convention President Ronnie Floyd was leading his own congregation, Cross Church in Springdale, Ark., into intensive prayer for revival in America and challenging 46,000-plus Southern Baptist churches to extraordinary prayer as well.

"I looked at our churches in McKinney, and you can't really 'do church' much better when it comes to getting

people to come in," Smith said. "But in order for us to reach 700,000 lost people in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, we needed God to do something only He could do. I guess you could say P4EH was born out of desperation. If you are doing everything you know to do, and you are still being overwhelmed, then we need to pray."

"But in order for us to reach 700,000 lost people in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, we needed God to do something only He could do. ... If you are doing everything you know to do, and you are still being overwhelmed, then we need to pray."

Vince Smith
Director of missions
Collin Baptist Association

Smith already understood the value of NAMB's "God's Plan for Sharing" (GPS), a strategic framework that helps churches reach a Great Commission goal of "every believer sharing the gospel and every person hearing the gospel by 2020." In the spirit of GPS, the Collin Association team began planning their

strategy: canvassing door-to-door, mapping the city, and prayer walking every street.

Then they had an "aha!" moment. "I would say it was a God-coincidence that, at this same time, we were working

with Mapping Center for Church Growth and Evangelism and they had data available about who lives in each of these homes," Smith said. "We asked the question: What happens if we can generate for every church member the names of the people who live around them, so that eventually we will pray for every household in the city by name?"

In that moment, the GPS strategy from NAMB intersected with the power of GPS technology.

A vision of praying by name for every home in McKinney suddenly was overtaken by a vision of praying by name for each of the 300,000 households in Collin County. In conversation with leaders of the two Baptist state conventions in Texas, Collin's leaders raised their eyes to that great harvest field.

Before long, however, they realized God wanted them to say yes to an even bigger vision: praying by name for every home in America.

"Each step of the way, we said, 'Imagine what God might do if we prayed for all of these people by name,'" Smith said. "Let's face it, Amazon and everybody else knows where everybody lives already, how much more so does God? And we want each of them to have a living witness to Jesus Christ."

Now in 40 states

Collin Association leaders met with a group of Christian businessmen whose work involves extracting data to understand neighborhoods and design marketing campaigns, Smith said. Alongside those men's donated efforts, Texas Baptists invested significant time and dollars to help create a church "dashboard" that helps congregations launch every-home outreach campaigns.

As church member addresses are added to a campaign, a database generates neighborhood maps with household-level attributes, including names, addresses, age groups, marital status, presence of children, education level, ethnicity, language spoken in the home, and length of residence. Individual church members can use the lists to pray by name for their neighbors, and the congregation can leverage the

information to efficiently promote church outreaches like food drives, backyard VBS, block parties, or neighborhood Bible studies.

A pastor can see a real-time view of prayer coverage by church volunteers, as well as identify strategic neighborhoods—mission field "sweet spots"—where church member homes are clustered.

Each church pays a flat \$120 annual fee for its dashboard. Individuals interested in praying for their neighbors on their own can join without cost.

In the six months since the P4EH platform was rolled out, the network has grown to 40 states and the District of Columbia.

Pastor Rosenthal leads a 300-plus member, predominantly African American congregation in an area of McKinney that includes both housing authority apartments and \$500,000 single-family dwellings. He likes the way P4EH complements his congregation's Tuesday night S.H.O.P. (Sweet Hour of Prayer) gathering, plus how it supports their evangelism efforts.

"Church members may have apprehensions going into a community," Rosenthal said. "Now we can pray for the people by name before we even knock on the door. This gives people the strong feeling they are going somewhere God is already at work."

"The most rewarding part are the stories that I am hearing back from the street," Smith noted. "As people begin praying for their neighbors, their neighbors—even the ones they never knew before—are coming and talking to them, and that is opening the door for spiritual conversations."

"We are hearing about more and more people who are coming to have a personal relationship with Jesus, and it all started because someone in their neighborhood started praying for them," he said.

To learn more about Pray4EveryHome, visit www.pray4everyhome.com. For more information about GPS, visit www.namb.net/gps. (BP/SBC Life)

Mark Kelly is a freelance writer and is a member of Johnson Ferry Baptist Church in Marietta, Ga.

Senior Living Celebrations see registration rush

Louisville-Kentucky Baptist seniors are deciding in droves to attend Senior Living Celebrations.

The Kentucky Baptist Convention event saw an early registration rush of more than 550 people. That's about 50 shy of last year—and the first celebration is still a month away.

"We give thanks to God for our Kentucky Baptist seniors and we want to encourage them to put on the full armor of God every day," said KBC Women's and Senior Adult Consultant Shelly Johns White.

Seniors have the first opportunity to get armored for victory on April 18 at Madisonville Baptist Church. Two more events follow on April 19 at Severns Valley Baptist Church in Elizabethtown and April 21 at First Baptist Church of Richmond.

"Senior Living Celebrations encourage seniors to connect with God, each other and live obediently for Christ," White said, "and this segment of the church still has much to do in the service of our Lord."

Hear words of inspiration from several of KBC's regional consultants and enjoy the musical talents of five-time Grammy award winner Larnelle Harris.

Receive valuable information and inspiration from more than a dozen breakout sessions at each location.

Registration for Senior Living Celebrations is only

\$20. After April 11, the fee increases to \$25. For more information, visit www.kybaptist.org/seniorcelebration.

"We give thanks to God for our Kentucky Baptist seniors and we want to encourage them to put on the full armor of God every day."

Shelly Johns White,
KBC Senior Adult Consultant

WESTERN Recorder + Your church newsletter

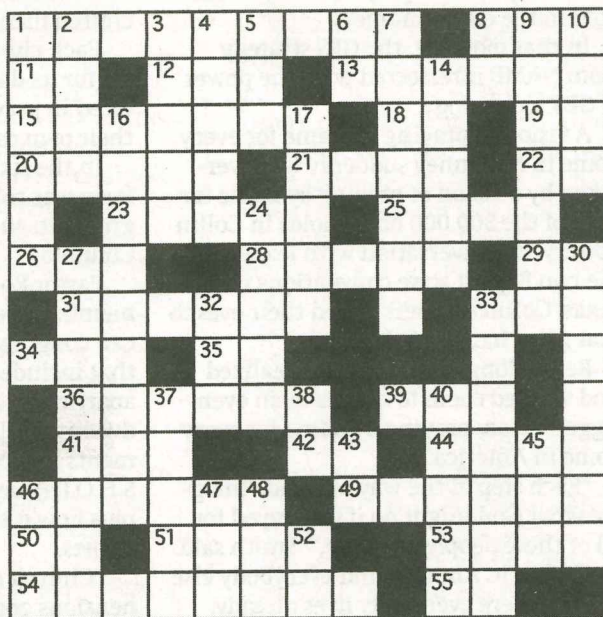
TWO GREAT PUBLICATIONS, ONE LESS POST OFFICE HEADACHE

Bible Crosswords

Across

- 1 "Confession is made unto _____" (Romans 10:10)
- 8 To make a choice
- 11 "There _____ I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20)
- 12 Woman's name
- 13 A narrow fold or wrinkle
- 15 "To know ... the _____ of my days" (Psalm 39:4)
- 18 Man's title
- 19 North America, abbr.
- 20 "_____ the day in which he was taken up" (Acts 1:2)
- 21 "_____, Father" (Mark 14:36)
- 22 Southwestern state, abbr.
- 23 Playful aquatic mammal
- 25 The book before Nehemiah
- 26 Man's name
- 28 "Brightness of his _____" (Hebrews 1:3)
- 29 New covenant writings, abbr.
- 31 "_____, I say unto you" (John 3:3)
- 33 Suffix
- 34 A precious stone
- 35 Opposite of yes
- 36 Holds royal office
- 39 One of Paul's epistles, abbr.
- 41 Cable News Network, abbr.
- 42 Gym class, abbr.
- 44 Meaning partial or half, prefix
- 46 "Put thou my tears into thy _____" (Psalm 56:8)
- 49 Prince of Islam

By Beverley Barnes



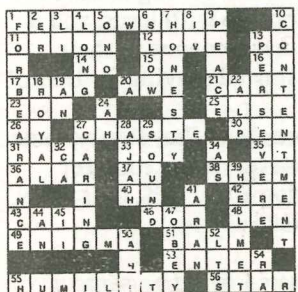
#059

- 50 First person contraction
- 51 "He shall _____ like a lion" (Hosea 11:10)
- 53 "The _____ of the valleys" (Song of Solomon 2:1)
- 54 "He gave his only _____ Son" (John 3:16)
- 55 Helena's state, abbr.

Down

- 1 "The Lord called _____: and he answered, Here am I" (1 Samuel 3:4)
- 2 The end of a prayer
- 3 "_____ the fatherless and widows" (James 1:27)
- 4 Grown-up
- 5 Black sticky substance
- 6 Observation post, abbr.
- 7 The book after Leviticus
- 8 Short agreement
- 9 A long narrow triangular flag
- 10 A streetcar
- 14 Chief _____ Horse
- 16 "Day of _____" (Leviticus 23:28)
- 17 "My God; _____ will I seek thee" (Psalm 63:1)
- 24 A city of Judah (Joshua 15:39)
- 27 "_____ evil with good" (Romans 12:21)
- 30 "We have seen and do _____" (1 John 4:14)
- 32 Participate ending
- 33 The meek shall _____ the earth (Matthew 5:5)
- 37 Inward, prefix
- 38 South American language, abbr.
- 40 What David wrote
- 43 Plural of E
- 45 1,000 x 1,000, abbr.
- 46 Put this on baby when feeding
- 47 Abram's nephew (Genesis 12:5)
- 48 Of every tree thou mayest _____ (Genesis 2:16)
- 52 Do, _____, mi

#058



MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF

EASTWOOD—First Church has called **Michael Parks** as pastor.

LOUISVILLE—Grace Fellowship Church will host the **Andy Gullahorn** Concert April 1 at 7:30 p.m. Doors open at 6:45 p.m. For tickets and other information, call (502) 632-6500. **Andy Sabaka** is pastor.

SPRINGFIELD—Central Association will host the Children's Ministry Day April 2 at Springfield Church. Registration begins at 12:45 p.m. with activities for children starting at 1 p.m. **Jay Hatfield** is director of missions.

CLASSIFIED ADS

SEEKING: Bi-vocational pastor for small congregation located in DeMossville, Ky. In charge of the welfare and responsible care of the church. Preside at all meetings of the church. Preach at appointed hours of worship on Sunday, lead regular midweek meetings, and administer ordinances as taught in Scriptures. Have general care of the spiritual welfare of the membership of the church. Submit your resumé by mail to DeMossville Baptist Church, P.O. Box 27, DeMossville, KY 41033, or e-mail to dbc@zoomtown.com.

SEEKING: Munfordville Baptist Church is seeking its next full-time pastor. Criteria include being a Southern Baptist Convention preacher who adheres to the Baptist Faith and Message and will be supportive of the Cooperative Program for missions. Resumes and sermon DVDs should be sent to the attention of Pulpit Committee Chairperson at P.O. Box 445, Munfordville, KY 42765.

SEEKING: Evergreen Baptist Church, 2698 Evergreen Rd., Frankfort, KY 40601, is seeking a part-time children's minister and a part-time youth minister. (502) 223-8364 office@evergreenbaptistchurch.us.

SEEKING: New River/McCreary County Missionary Baptist Association is accepting resumes through March 31 for a full-time director of missions. Please send resumé to nrmc@highland.net, or mail to 24728 Scott Hwy, Winfield, TN 37892.

SEEKING: Send resumes for full-time music pastor to EHBC, 703 E. Walters, Harrison, AR 72601, or email to ehbcadmin@eagleheightsharrison.org.

SEEKING: Flemingsburg Baptist Church seeking full-time minister/evangelist to Fleming County youth. Duties will include building relationships with county schools and students, developing evangelistic and discipleship opportunities for community youth, and being an active member of Flemingsburg Baptist Church and discipling its student members. Send resumes to FlemingsburgBaptistYouth@gmail.com. Deadline May 1, 2016.

SEEKING: Part-time minister of music. Position requires leadership of congregational singing for 2 Sunday morning services (traditional/blended), Sunday evening service, Wednesday evening service, direction of choir, seasonal cantatas, other events as needed. The church averages 350 for worship attendance spread among three Sunday services, one of which is contemporary. The 2008 Baptist Hymnal is used in all services for the purpose of this position. Send resumé to Zion's Cause Baptist Church, 1532 U.S. Hwy. 68 W, Benton, KY 42025. Please submit resumé by April 15.

SEEKING: New Bethel Baptist Church, a growing, mid-sized church located in Northern Kentucky, is seeking a full-time pastor to provide spiritual instruction and leadership to its members and to the Verona, Ky., community. The church averages 160+ in Sunday morning worship, has many active ministries, and is seeking to

expand its facilities. A complete job description, and community and church profile can be found at <http://www.nbbcky.com/>. A resumé, cover letter and three references should be submitted no later than April 15 in electronic format (preferred) to newbethelbaptistverona@gmail.com, or via mail at Attn.: Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 50, Verona, KY 41092.

SEEKING: Pioneer Baptist Church in Harrodsburg is seeking a part-time (\$100/wk) worship leader. Send resumes to chrisortsr@gmail.com, or 260 Sparrow Lane, Harrodsburg, KY 40330.

SEEKING: Friendship Baptist Church is seeking a bi-vocational minister of music to lead a blended worship of a multi-generational church. Candidates must be experienced in worship leadership, evidence a kingdom focus and be a team player. We are located in Campbellsburg, Ky. Send resumes to Friendship Baptist Church, 5411 Bengal Rd., Campbellsburg, KY 42718, or to finance@friendshipcampbellsburg.com. Resumes accepted until April 15.

SERVICE: Finally see your creative ideas in print. Trellis Writing & ghostwriting offers services in multiple genres and mediums. Extensive experience in Christian fiction/non-fiction, as well as ministry, scholarly, and business writing. To get started, visit www.trelliswriting.com, contact info@trelliswriting.com, or call (602) 803-0820.

SEEKING: Rosebower Baptist Church is seeking a part-time music minister. Please mail resumé to 1120 Tyree Rd., Paducah, KY 42003.

SEEKING: Oldham-Trimble Association is now receiving resumes for the director of missions position. Resumes should be mailed to DOM Search Team, c/o Sandra Perry, 673 Brownsboro Rd., Pendleton, KY 40055. You can also call Mark Roberts at (502) 494-2946. Deadline for receiving them is April 30.

SEEKING: Cornerstone Baptist Church is seeking a senior pastor. A young church between Lexington, Ky., and Winchester, Ky. Send resumes to 4451 Winchester Rd., Lexington, KY 40509.

SEEKING: Stithton Baptist Church is a culturally, ethnically and economically diverse body of believers located in Radcliff, Ky., adjacent to the Fort Knox Army community. We are prayerfully searching for a pastor that is led of the Holy Spirit and meets the qualifications as outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and 1 Peter 5:1-4. We seek a visionary man who would lead us in revival, teach us God's word, direct our spiritual growth, live out the Great Commission, and provide us servant leadership in the day-to-day functioning of the church, its staff, and membership. Resumes and inquiries can be sent to StithtonPastorSearch@gmail.com.

FOR RENT: Destin, Fla., beach house. 6 Bed/4 Bath. 1/2 block to beach. Perfect for family vacations. VRBO.com/454133. (502) 727-7426.



March

29 Get Acquainted Day,
Ky. Baptist Building,
Louisville

How Erasmus' Greek NT changed history

By David Roach

Houston—A conference and museum exhibit at Houston Baptist University helped mark the 500th anniversary of a Greek New Testament edition the exhibit's curator said "spurred the Reformation" and "continues to be important" for biblical studies.

On March 1, 1516, a Dutch priest named Desiderius Erasmus published the Greek New Testament's first ever "critical edition"—a version that drew from all available Greek manuscripts to compile a text with wording as close as possible to that of the original inspired authors. That work, which went through four revisions, was the first published Greek text available to the public. It is credited with changing Bible translation, preaching and even the course of church history.

HBU commemorated the anniversary with a Feb. 25-27 conference and an exhibit in its Dunham Bible Museum scheduled to run through Dec. 16 titled "Renaissance of the Bible: 500th Anniversary of Erasmus' Greek Text, the Foundation for Reformation."

"We have the first three editions of Erasmus' Greek text in our collection, as well as Erasmus' 'Annotations' and 'Paraphrases' in English, so it was natural for us to have a special exhibit for this 500th anniversary," Dunham Museum director Diana Severance told Baptist Press. "As I began studying and putting together our exhibit, I gained new appreciation for Erasmus' foundational importance to the Reformation."

"Erasmus saw the corruption in the church of his day and wanted to go back to the original source of the Christian faith, the Bible," Severance said in written comments. "He believed the Bible should be for everyone, not just for the educated elite, and should be translated into the common vernacular of the people."

'Textus Receptus'

Erasmus was born in 1466 in Rotterdam, the second largest city in the Netherlands today. After both his parents died of the plague, Erasmus was raised by monks in a monastery, where he fostered a love for books. Eventually, he left the monastery to study at the University of Paris and became a leading scholar of the 16th-century "humanist" movement, which studied ancient Greek and Latin works.

He experienced what church historian Timothy George called a "turning point" in 1504 when he discovered a century-old manuscript by Lorenzo Valla

with notes about Paul's Epistles based on various Greek manuscripts. Inspired by Valla, Erasmus decided to publish a critical edition of the Greek New Testament.

"That had never been done before," said George, a keynote speaker at HBU's conference and dean of Samford University's Beeson Divinity School. Erasmus "collected manuscripts from all the places he could go—universities and monasteries that kept these manuscripts—brought them together, and began to collate them. And in 1516, a publisher in the city of Basel, Switzerland, named Froben published the first-ever critical edition of the New Testament, which Erasmus had edited."

Not even Erasmus realized the significance of his accomplishment, George told Baptist Press. His work became the basis for Martin Luther's German translation of the New Testament, William Tyndale's English translation and Hungarian and Spanish translations.

A century later, Erasmus' work was dubbed the "textus receptus" (Latin for "received text") and became the basis for the King James Version.

In the late 1520s, Erasmus proposed a "new" way of pronouncing Greek he believed to be consistent with classical Greek pronunciation. Known as "Erasmian" pronunciation, his scheme remained the standard method used in academic settings to pro-

nounce biblical Greek for nearly 500 years until some scholars challenged it recently, George said.

'The egg Luther hatched'

In Germany, Luther studied the first edition of Erasmus' Greek New Testament as he formulated his "95 Theses," the document widely credited with launching the Protestant Reformation in 1517 by articulating a series of grievances against the Roman Catholic Church. The first three theses drew on Erasmus' translation of the Greek word *metanoete*, in Matthew 3:2 and elsewhere, as "repent" rather than the traditional Catholic rendering of "do penance," which supported the sacramental system.

Erasmus, George said, "uncovered" that the Greek word referenced "a change of heart, a conversion of life" and "not just an act you do, a good work you perform."

"Luther got that, and he used Erasmus' Greek New Testament to give a whole different understanding of what repentance and penance was about," George said. "And that's what triggered the Reformation."

Though Erasmus never left the Roman Catholic Church, it has been said since of the Reformation for five centuries, "Eras-

mus laid the egg that Luther hatched."

A change in preaching

Rick Melick, distinguished professor of New Testament at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, told BP it is "unclear how many manuscripts (Erasmus) used in his work," but most originated in approximately the 10th century—much later than the third- and fourth-century manuscripts that have since been discovered and are used by contemporary scholars.

"Now most scholars reject the Erasmus text as the best text," Melick said in written comments, "and therefore the translations based on it are also considered less than the best," though they are quite accurate.

Still, Erasmus' work "marked a significant turning point in history," Melick said, and "changed the way serious pastors approach preaching."

When today's preachers reference Greek words and language-study resources, they are following a tradition instituted in part by Erasmus.

Thanks to Erasmus and his successors who produced other critical New Testament editions, "pastors can read the Greek texts to verify the content of the New Testament," Melick said. "Critical editions enable them to make choices they believe are correct in places where there are variants. Pastors should work from the Greek text and in seminary are taught how to use it."

"Second, there are an abundance of resources that help pastors, based on the critical texts," he continued. "These include word studies, theological dictionaries, commentaries, lexicons and translations. These significantly improve the content of preaching. Third, the critical text enables pastors to make their way through the multiplicity of translations in any language."

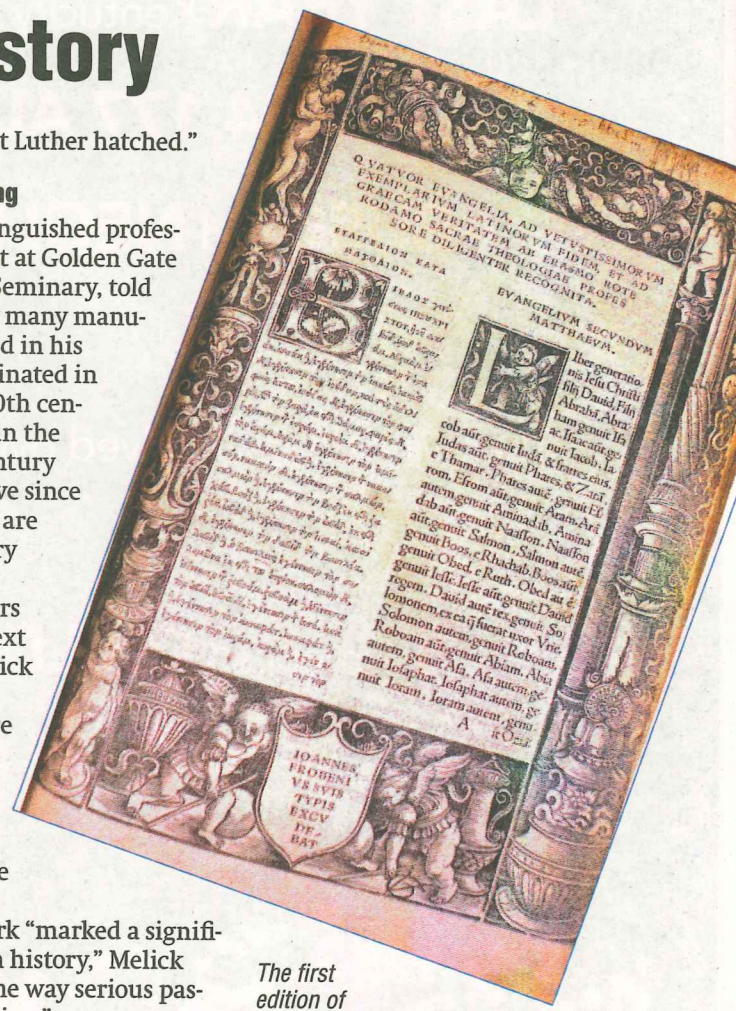
'I vehemently dissent'

Erasmus wasn't without flaws, George said, noting he "missed ... the total gravity of sin and the depth of our alienation from God and so, therefore, the necessity of a grace that reaches deeper and is much more transformative."

Yet "at his heart, I think he really wanted to follow Jesus Christ and encourage other people to live a Christian life," George said.

That included providing common people with access to the New Testament, which appeared in Latin translation alongside the Greek in his original edition.

"I vehemently dissent from those who would not have private persons read the Holy Scriptures nor have them translated into the vulgar tongues," Erasmus wrote in the preface to his 1516 edition. "... Would that they were translated into all languages so that not only Scotch and Irish, but Turks and Saracens (a medieval term for Arabs) might be able to read and know them." (BP)



The first edition of Erasmus' Greek New Testament was printed with Greek on the left of each page and a new Latin translation on the right. Houston Baptist University photo



WESTERN Recorder
Shine like stars in the world.

Start your subscription plan today
Call us at (502) 489-3535

Individual & Gift Subscriptions:
\$17 each

Save more! Church Group Subscriptions:
\$11 each (5 or more)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone (Day): _____

Email: _____

- ☐ Subscribing for myself
- ☐ Payment for gift subscription
- ☐ Gift subscription from:
- ☐ Yes! Sign me up for Western Recorder's FREE e-newsletter
- ☐ Tell me how to save my church money by printing its newsletter on back



Use share icon on your phone or tablet to add WesternRecorder.org to your home screen!

LAST YEAR Kentucky Child Protective Services
investigated **54,177 ALLEGED CASES**
of **ABUSE** and **NEGLECT**.

These incidents involved over **73,000 CHILDREN**.

1 in **8** American **CHILDREN** will experience
maltreatment **BY AGE 18**.



*Sunrise helps children in crisis shine.
Please support this ministry.*



800.456.1386 • sunrise.org

CROSSROADS • CUMBERLAND ADVENTURE PROGRAM • GLEN DALE • MOREHEAD • SPRING MEADOWS • WOODLAWN